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PRECIOUS
PROMISES.



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PRECIOUS PROMISES.

BY

HENRY JENNINGS, F.R.S.L.

With Recomendatory Remarks

BY

OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, D.D., AND G. J. TUBBS, M.A.

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RECOMMENDATORY REMARKS.

BATH, Nov. 14, 1865.

FROM the partial examination, under the pressure of work, which I have made of Mr. Jennings's "Precious Promises," I should judge that the work is scripturally sound, and therefore theologically correct, and that it is well calculated to accomplish the noble object of the excellent Author—viz., to "comfort and cheer all who are in circumstances of affliction and distress."

OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, D.D.

PARKSIDE LODGE,

Nov. 11, 1865.

MR. JENNINGS's little volume "Precious Promises" is thoroughly sound and evangelical, and is written in an interesting style. I cordially recommend it to the Christian public, and hope it may be widely circulated.

G. J. TUBBS, A.M.,
Incumbent of St. Mary's Reading.



P R E F A C E.

IT has been my prayerful and earnest endeavour in writing this book to direct the weary to look to the blessed Saviour for rest, to comfort the mourner, and to cheer all who are in circumstances of affliction and distress by pointing to the Divine Redeemer, who has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I can most cordially sympathise with all who are passing through the deep waters of affliction. While writing this, the heaviest billows of bereavement are passing over me. I am prostrated by the greatest trial I have ever been called to endure. In seven days death has removed from my happy circle my beloved and honoured mother and my youngest and very affectionate sister. I miss both their smiling faces and cheerful voices ; but I must not complain. The much-beloved, departed ones

are now unspeakably happy, and will for ever wear a crown of eternal glory. May abundant grace be imparted to you, dear reader, and to me, so that, when we are most heavily afflicted and grievously tried, we shall be enabled to say, “He hath done all things well;” “Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight;” “Not my will, but thine be done.”

HENRY JENNINGS.

REST FOR THE WEARY.

“COME unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” What a gracious invitation ! what a blessed and comforting promise is made in these words to every tempest-tossed soul ! Those who are most troubled, most bowed down, may obtain relief ; for the Saviour says, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is rest for the weary ; there is rest for you, dear reader, and for me, if we ask Jesus to make us the possessors thereof. “ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us .

our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Did ever words like these drop from the lips of any being save God? The sinner is only required to acknowledge the debt, and the bond will be cancelled. Is it not better to be saved by Divine mercy than to be sued by Divine justice? As soon as we are oppressed and groan under our own burdens, we are sure to be eased by Christ's shoulders. If we remember our offences with unfeigned grief, the offended Lord joyfully forgives and forgets them all. Where misery is undiscerned, mercy is undesired. Christ may knock long at such doors before he gains admittance. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." Christ oftener comes to the door than he enters the house. As we knock at his door for audience, so does he at ours for entrance. If his person be shut out, our prayers will be shut out. In order to be happy we must be one with Christ; we must truly repent and believe on him for salvation. When a sinner repents the angels rejoice; and give me the mourning on earth that creates music in heaven. Many are battered as lead by the hammer who were never bettered as gold by the fire. Sometimes that repentance which begins

in the fears of hell ends in the flames of hell. How important it is to be the subjects of godly sorrow for sin, and how glorious the declaration of the great “I am”—“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isa. xlivi. 25)! What infinite love to make such gracious promises to poor lost sinners! Who can fully comprehend the love of God in Christ Jesus? The more we think about it, the more astounded we are; the most profound thinkers have been obliged to bow before the mysteries of godliness. Simonides, an ancient philosopher, was once asked by his sovereign, “What is God?” The philosopher, in reply, requested a day to consider the question; he then asked for two days, then for four, until at length, being pressed by the monarch for an answer, he candidly confessed, “The more I consider the question, the less am I able to answer it.” The true Christian is the best philosopher—he is the wisest man. Ask the shepherd-boy tending his fleecy charge on the plains of Bethlehem “What is God?” and he will tell you, “God! he is our refuge and strength—a very present help in trouble. He is my shepherd; *I shall not want.*” Ask the poor

fisherman of Galilee, and Peter will tell you, “God ! He is the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.” Ask John “What is God ?” and he will say, “God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Ask the poor, trembling, penitent, pardoned sinner, and he will tell you that God in Christ is “rest for the weary,” that the most cast down and heavily-laden sinner may lose his burden at the foot of the cross, because the blessed Redeemer has said, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” Dear reader, have you had a view of Jesus, as taking away the sin of the world, as made a sin-offering for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him ? Have you viewed him, as perfectly righteous in himself ? and, despairing of being justified by any righteousness of your own, have you submitted to the righteousness of God ? Has your heart ever been brought to a deep conviction of this important truth—that, if ever you are saved at all, it must be through Christ ; that, if ever God extend mercy to you at all, it must be for his sake ; that, if ever you are fixed in the temple of God above, you must stand there as an everlasting trophy of that victory

which Christ has gained over the powers of hell, which would otherwise have triumphed over you ?

Our Lord says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." He says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Have you looked to him, as the only Saviour ? Have you been drawn unto him by that sacred magnet, the attracting influence of his dying love ? Do you know what it is to come to Christ as a poor, weary, and heavy-laden sinner, that you may find rest ? Do you know what it is, in a spiritual sense, to "eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man ;" that is, to look upon Christ crucified as the great support of your soul, and to feel a desire after him, as earnest as the appetite of nature after its necessary food ? Have you known what it is cordially to surrender yourself to Christ, as a poor creature, whom love has made his property ? Have you committed your immortal soul to him, that he may purify and save it ; that he may govern it by the dictates of his Word, and the influences of his Spirit ; that he may use it for his glory ; that he may appoint it to what exercise and discipline he pleases, while it dwells here in flesh ; and that he may receive it at death, and

fix it among those spirits who, with perpetual songs of praise, surround his throne, and are his servants for ever? Have you heartily consented to this? And do you, on this account of the matter, renew your consent? Do you renew it deliberately and determinedly, and feel your whole soul, as it were, saying "Amen" while you read this? If this be the case, then I can, with great pleasure, give you, as it were, the right hand of fellowship, and salute and embrace you as a sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ; as one who is "delivered from the power of darkness," and who is "translated into the kingdom of the Son of God." I can then salute you in the Lord, as one to whom, as a teacher, I am commissioned and charged to speak comfortably, and to tell you, not that I absolve you from your sins, for it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, but that the blessed God himself absolveth you; that you are one to whom he hath said in his Gospel, and is continually saying, "Your sins are forgiven you;" therefore go in peace, and take the comfort of it.

But, if you are a stranger to these experiences, and to this temper, which I have now described, the great work is yet undone; you are an im-

penitent and unbelieving sinner, and “the wrath of God abideth on you.” However you may have been awakened and alarmed, whatever resolution you may have formed for amending your life, how right soever your notions may be, how pure soever your forms of worship, how ardent soever your zeal, how severe soever your mortification, how humane soever your temper, how inoffensive soever your life may be, I can speak no comfort to you. Vain are all your religious hopes, if there has not been a cordial humiliation before the presence of God for all your sins ; you must come freely and boldly to the throne of grace, confessing all your transgressions, pleading for mercy through the blood of Jesus ; and, if you happen to be one of the most unlikely subjects to find inward peace and lasting rest, still pray on and you will certainly succeed.

Mr. Abbott states, in his “Mother at Home,” that a gentleman from England brought a letter of introduction to a gentleman in America. The stranger was of accomplished mind and manners, but an infidel. The gentleman to whom he had brought letters of introduction, and his lady, were active Christian philanthropists. They kindly invited the stranger to make their

house his home, and treated him with every possible attention. Upon the evening of his arrival, just before the usual hour for retiring, the gentleman, knowing the peculiarity of his friend's sentiments, observed to him that the hour had arrived in which they usually attended family prayers; that he should be happy to have him remain and unite with them, or, if he preferred, he could retire. The gentleman intimated that it would give him pleasure to remain. A chapter of the Bible was read, and the family all knelt in prayer, the stranger with the rest. In a few days the stranger left this hospitable dwelling, and embarked on board a ship for a foreign land. In the course of three or four years, however, the providence of God again led the stranger to the same dwelling. But, oh, how changed! He came the happy Christian, the humble man of piety and prayer. In the course of the evening's conversation he remarked that when he, on the first evening of his previous visit, knelt with them in family prayer, it was the first time for many years that he had bowed the knee to his Maker. This act brought to his mind such a crowd of recollections, it so vividly reminded him of a parent's prayers which he had heard at home,

that he was entirely bewildered. His emotion was so great that he did not hear one syllable of the prayer which was uttered, from its commencement to its close. But God made this the instrument of leading him from the dreary wilds of infidelity to the peace and joy of piety. His parents had long before gone home to their eternal rest ; but the prayers they had offered for and with their son had left an influence which could not die. They might have prayed ever so fervently for him ; but, if they had not prayed with him, if they had not knelt by his side, and caused his listening ear to hear their earnest supplications, their child might have continued through life an infidel.

If we are burdened by sin, there is but One who can relieve us ; and that One has said, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee ;" "I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth ; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." In the ninth chapter of the book of Nehemiah, when the prophet had recapitulated the sins of Israel and the mercies of their God, he says, in the seventeenth verse, "But thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." This is intro-

duced amidst strong expressions of Israel's sinfulness. They and our fathers dealt proudly and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments ; refused to obey ; were unmindful of thy wonders ; cast thy laws behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them : yet it is recorded, " In the time of their trouble they cried unto thee and thou hearest them from heaven ;" so that we learn from hence that it is both our duty and happiness no longer to delay ; and, if we are tempted to tarry because of supposed unfitness, we should reply, " It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy he hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Lord." We are fit subjects for mercy : we are sinners ; and that is what God wishes you and me to feel, dear reader. Let us embrace that mercy and God will sanctify us wholly—body, soul, and spirit. God is true, and delights in exalting his faithfulness. Created things may change; but in God there is neither变ableness nor shadow of turning. " It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world

to save sinners." I know this to be true : for he has saved me ; he has bestowed pardon on me, though so unworthy ; he has buried the remembrance of my sins in the depths of oblivion ; I can rejoice in the consciousness that "the iniquity of Judah shall be sought for, and shall not be found." At one time I was fearfully troubled about my state in the sight of God ; I felt the exceeding sinfulness of sin so much that I thought I must be eternally lost, that it was impossible for me to be saved, and that, of all sinners living, I was the worst. These impressions grew stronger and stronger ; and then Satan, who was a liar from the beginning, harassed me with the idea that I had committed "the unpardonable sin ;" and this distressed my mind so much that I despaired of ever being saved. At last, in answer to earnest prayer, some gentle voice seemed to whisper, "There is rest for the weary," "There is rest for you ;" and then, still louder, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Light seemed to dawn upon my dark mind ; a bright light appeared to shine round about me, and I was filled with ecstatic joy. Once everything I saw appeared dark and miserable ; I was

the subject of darkness worse than Egyptian ; but now am I light in the Lord through the death, mediation, and intercession of the Divine Saviour. I hear no longer the thunders of Sinai as I once heard them, but the voice and music of harpers who praise redeeming love ; I see no longer the blackness of despair as my portion, but a kingdom of glory. There is nothing now seen but the bright azure of a radiant heaven, and a voice is heard, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared ;" "Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine." Dear reader, are you saved ? if not, why not ? There is the same Saviour now for you as there was for me. It is a faithful saying that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. Are you not a sinner ? Why, then, should you not receive this saying ? It is faithful, and therefore worthy of your confidence. "You will receive it :" but when ? It is *now* a faithful saying ; it is *now* worthy of all acceptation ; it is *now* that Christ receives sinners ; and you are not excluded. "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ;" to-morrow you may be in your coffin. "This is the work of God, that we *should* believe on him whom he hath sent"

(John vi. 29). Obey, and be happy. Are you troubled about your sins, dear reader ? if so, ask God at once to forgive you ; offer the following prayer, and God grant that you may hear some sweet voice whispering, “I will give you rest” :—

To thee, O Lord, do I now come, invited by the name of thy Son, and trusting in his righteousness and grace. Laying myself at thy feet, with shame and confusion of face, and smiting upon my breast, I say, with the humble publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner !” I acknowledge, O Lord, that I have been a great transgressor. “My sins have reached unto heaven,” and “mine iniquities are lifted up unto the skies.” The irregular propensities of my corrupted and degenerate nature have, in ten thousand aggravated instances, wrought to bring forth fruit unto death. And, if thou shouldst be strict to mark mine offences, I must be silent under a load of guilt, and immediately sink into destruction. But thou hast graciously called me to return unto thee, though I have been a wandering sheep, a prodigal son, a back-sliding child. Behold, therefore, O Lord, I come unto thee. I come, convinced not only of my sin, *but of my folly*. I come, from my very

heart ashamed of myself, and with an acknowledgment, in the sincerity and humility of my soul, that “I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.” I am confounded myself at the remembrance of these things; but be thou “merciful to my unrighteousness, and do not remember against me my sins and transgressions!” Keep me, O Lord, to bring back unto thee those powers and faculties which I have ungratefully and sacrilegiously alienated from thy service; and receive, I beseech thee, thy poor revolted creature, who is now convinced of thy claim, and desires nothing in the world so much as to be thine!

Use me, O Lord, I beseech thee, as the instrument of thy glory; and honour me so far as, either by doing or suffering what thou shalt appoint, to bring some revenue of praise to thee, and to be of benefit to the world in which I dwell! And may it please thee from this day forward to number me among “thy peculiar people, that I may no more be a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God!” Receive, O heavenly Father, thy returning prodigal! Wash me in the blood of thy dear Son; clothe me *with his perfect righteousness*; and sanctify me

throughout by the power of thy Spirit ! Destroy, I beseech thee, more and more the power of sin in mine heart ! Transform me more into thine own image, and fashion me to the resemblance of Jesus, whom henceforth I would acknowledge as my teacher and sacrifice, my intercessor and my Lord ! Communicate to me, I beseech thee, the needful influences of thy purifying, cheering, and comforting Spirit ; and lift up the light of thy countenance upon me.

Dear reader, trust in Jesus only, and then, whatever storms may beat upon you, you have no reason to fear. He is the “ Rock of Ages.” Some dying Christians have left most encouraging testimonies for all to trust in Jesus.

The Rev. John Rees, of Crown Street, Soho, London, was visited on his death-bed by the Rev. John Leifchild, who very seriously asked him to describe the state of his mind. This appeal to the honour of his religion roused him ; it freshened his dying lamp ; and, raising himself up in his bed, he looked his friend in the face, and with great deliberation, energy, and dignity uttered the following words :—“ Christ in his person, Christ in the love of his heart, and Christ in the power of his arm, is the

Rock on which I rest; and now" (reclining his head gently on the pillow), "Death, strike!"

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." In the distillation of strong waters, the first drawn is fullest of spirits. "The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God." God prizes a Christian in the end, and delights in the blossoms of youth above the sheddings of old age. Naturalists inform us that the most oriental pearls are generated of the morning dews. Had any of the children of Israel stayed to pass through the Red Sea with the Egyptians, they would probably have perished with them. That field is full of the richest corn which is cleansed from its noxious weeds in the spring. How pleasant is it to see the thousands of Israel seeking the heavenly manna in the morning of their lives! Is it not better to cry for mercy on earth with the publican than to call for water in hell with devils? To discover grace in an old sinner is *well*, but to view it in vigorous youth is *better*. All the beasts of sacrifice were offered to God in their prime. Jesus was carried in triumph

upon a *colt*, the *foal* of an ass. When the snow-drops of youth appear in the garden of the Church, they foretell a glorious summer approaching. It is hard to cast off the devil's yoke when we have worn it so long upon our necks. "Can a man be born when he is old?" Grace seldom grafts upon such withered stocks. An old sinner is nearer to the second death than he is to the second birth. It is more likely to see him taken out of the flesh than the flesh taken out of him. His body is nearer to corruption than his soul is to salvation. Where the enemy is the strongest there the victory is the hardest. Usually, where the devil pleads antiquity he keeps propriety. As there are none so old as that they should despair of mercy, so there are none so young as that they should presume on mercy. If God's to-day be too soon for thy repentance, thy tomorrow may be too late for his acceptance. Mercy's clock does not always strike at our back. The longer poison stays in the stomach, so much the more dangerous are its effects. O how amiable are the golden apples of grace in the silver pictures of blooming youth! God prizes a young friend, but punishes an old enemy. *Old sinners are somewhat like old*

serpents—the fullest of poison. It is singularly pleasant to view the *Ancient of Days* in *infants in days*. Blessed are those in whom grace is in its prosperity, while their nature is in its minority. Remember that your youthful sins lay a foundation for aged sorrows. You have but one arrow to shoot at the mark, and if that be shot at random, God may never put another into your bow. He says, “I am the first and the last.” He should be served from the first to the last. You can never come too soon to him who is your beginning; and you can never stay too long with him who is your ending. The longer you stay away from him, the heavier will your sins become. Come to Jesus now, and tell him you are weary of your burden, and he will say, “I will give thee rest.” Here are many “precious promises” which any poor sinner may plead at the throne of grace. Take them and make them your own: God’s people have pleaded them and been abundantly blessed thereby.

The faith of Dr. Watts in the promises of God was lively and unshaken. “I believe them enough,” said he, “to venture an eternity on them.” To a religious friend, at another time, he thus expressed himself: “I remember an

aged minister used to say that the most learned and knowing Christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises for their support as the common and unlearned; and so," continued he, "I find it. It is the plain promises of the Gospel that are my support; and I bless God they *are* plain promises, which do not require much labour and pains to understand them; for I can do nothing now but look into my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that."

Dear reader, have you sought to obtain rest? have you sought it in God's way? Have you approached God's throne as a penitent deeply sorry and humbled on account of your sins? If so, you may enjoy the earnest of the heavenly rest while on earth. From the Old and New Testament we are warranted to make these assertions. The Gospel encourages you to ask and receive, to seek and to find. The Gospel is just adapted for sinners; it is just adapted for you; it is suited to every one who is weary and seeking rest.

The Gospel is not only a revelation but a promise, and a promise exceeding great and precious. It not only holds forth to our view, but it proposes to our hope, eternal life, and whatever *is* previously necessary to the acquisi-

tion of it. The promise was early made, and was often renewed with enlargements. Thousands in the successive ages of the world have laid hold of it, and—it is “left” for us. Yes, in God’s blessed book we have “a promise left us of entering into his rest.”

But what is this rest? We may view it as it is begun upon earth, or completed in heaven. Even while the believer is upon earth, this rest is not only ensured, but begun. Hence, says the apostle, “We which have believed do enter into rest.” Before he knew the Saviour he was a stranger to rest; but Jesus had said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” he was enabled to believe his word; he ventured upon his promise, made application to him, and found “rest unto his soul.”

View him with regard to his understanding, and you will find that he has rest. He is freed from the jealousies and uneasinesses which arise from uncertainty of mind with regard to truth. He is no longer the sport of delusion; he is no longer like “a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed,” now urged in one direction and now in another; he no longer flounders in the mud and mire—he has found

rock ; he stands upon it : his goings are established. He "knows whom he has believed." He knows that he "has not followed cunningly devised fables." He knows "the doctrine" he has received "to be of God." He "has the witness in himself."

View him with regard to his conscience, and you will find that he has rest. He is freed from the torment of fear and the horrors of guilt. A crucified Saviour "has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweet-smelling savour." An apprehension of this truth "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." In proportion as we realize it by faith, the burden, too heavy for us to bear, loosens and falls off ; and, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

View him with regard to his passions and appetites, and you will find he has rest. While pride, and envy, and malice, and avarice, and sensual affections reigned within, often striving with each other, and always fighting against the convictions of his judgment, the man's breast was *nothing* but a scene of tumult : he was

"like the troubled sea when it cannot rest ; whose waters cast up mire and dirt : there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." But sanctifying grace has delivered him from "the bondage of corruption," and from the tyranny of adverse and raging lusts : it has subdued his tempers and regulated his desires ; it has restored order and self-government—and these have restored peace.

View him once more with regard to his "condition and circumstances," and you will find that he has rest. He is freed from those anxieties and disquietudes which devour others, who make the world their portion, and have no confidence in God. But the world is not his portion ; he has not laid up his treasure on earth. His inheritance is "incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him." He is nobly superior to events. Nothing that occurs can materially affect him ; he is therefore easy and composed. He has also a confidence in God which wonderfully calms the mind with regard to present occurrences. He knows that the God who loves him reigns over all ; that all his dispensations are righteous, and wise, and kind ; that he will not forsake him, but "make all things," however

contrary in their appearance and tendency, to "work together for his good." Hence he feels a holy indifference, a blessed resignation to the will of Providence ; and, committing all his concerns to his heavenly Father, he learns, "in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content :" according to the language of the prophet and the apostle, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee : because he trusteth in thee." "Be careful for nothing ; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But, excellent as his present condition is, compared with his former state, it is nothing compared with his future. With all his advantages here, a voice perpetually cries in his ears, "Arise and depart ; for this is not your rest." However favourable the voyage, they are now on the boisterous, treacherous ocean ; they are looking out for their native shore ; and by-and-by they will enter the harbour : "then are they glad because they are quiet ; so he bringeth them into their desired haven." At death, we are told, the *righteous* and the *merciful* enter into rest.

And this rest is pure, undisturbed, and everlasting.

Weary one, cast your burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. He is very gracious and very strong, and will joyfully bear it *wholly* if we cast it entirely upon him ; and he will give a blessing besides for thus exercising faith in him. The trial you are burdened with is *one* of the *all* things which work together for your good. When consequential self would manage all affairs, what can be expected from such a weak creature but mistakes and inconsistencies ? But when we are willing to commit all to the Lord, we may safely expect the issue will be good, befitting his infinite goodness and wisdom. A single eye to God's glory in all things is a very great strengthener under trials and crosses. When a messenger of Satan undeservedly blackens our character, and robs us of our good name, if we could but believe that God *can*, if for his glory, with infinite ease brighten the one and restore the other, we should be at once contented and satisfied. He knows where and how we can glorify him most; whether in honour or dishonour, prosperity or adversity, enjoying good report or evil report: and what glorifies him ought to satisfy us. It requires

more faith and grace to bear silently and wait patiently the Lord's pleasure under trials and crosses than to be active for him in his work. Self may take a considerable part in the one, but nothing but grace can enable and fit us for the other. Believers become weary from various causes ; sometimes because their sins separate between themselves and God : their comfort becomes small in proportion as they stray from his side. Our duty is to keep very close to our Father's side. A saint sometimes is filled with devout feelings when he has but little joy.

Consider that the loss of comfort is a separable adjunct from grace. The soul may be full of holy affections when it is empty of Divine consolations (Psal. lxiii. 1, 2, 8 ; Isa. l. 10, 7 ; Mich. vii. 8, 9 ; Psa. xlvi. 5). There may be, and often is, true grace, yea, much grace, where there is no comfort or joy. Comfort is not of the being, but of the well-being of a Christian. God hath not so linked these together, but that they may be put asunder. Spiritual joy is a joy that is often clouded : it is a flower apt to fade and wither. The wisdom that is from above will never lead a man to reason thus : "I have no comfort, therefore I have no grace; I have lost the joy that once I had, therefore

my condition is not good," &c. ; but it will lead a man to reason thus: "Though my comfort is gone, yet the God of my comfort abides; though my joy is lost, yet the seeds of grace remain." The best men's joys are as glass, bright and brittle, and ever in danger of breaking.

Consider that the precious things thou still enjoyest are far better than the joys and comforts that thou hast lost. Thy union with Christ, thy communion with Christ, thy sonship, thy saintship, the heirship thou still enjoyest by Christ, are far better than the comforts thou hast lost by sin. What though thy comforts be gone, thy union with Christ remains ; though thy comforts be gone, yet thou art a son, though a comfortless son ; an heir, though a comfortless heir ; a saint, though a comfortless saint. Though the bag of silver (thy comforts) be lost, yet the box of jewels (thy union with Christ, thy communion with Christ, thy sonship, thy saintship, thy heirship) which thou still enjoyest is far better than the bag of silver thou hast lost ; yea, the least of those precious jewels is of more worth than all the comforts in the world. Well, let this be a cordial to comfort thee, a star to lead thee, and a staff to support thee, that thy box of jewels is safe, though thy bag of silver be lost.

Remember thy condition is no other than the condition of those precious souls whose names were written upon the heart of Christ, and who are now at rest in the bosom of Christ. One day you shall have them praising and rejoicing, the next day mourning and weeping. One day you shall have them singing "The Lord is our portion," the next day sighing and expostulating with themselves, "Why are our souls cast down? Why is our harp turned to mourning, and our organs into the voice of them that weep?"

Consider that the causes of joy and comfort are not always the same. Haply thy former joy and comfort sprang from the witness of the Spirit, he bearing witness to thy soul that thy nature was changed, thy sins pardoned, thy soul reconciled. Now the Spirit may, upon some special occasion, bear witness to the soul that the heart of God is dearly set upon him, that he loves him with an everlasting love; and yet the soul may never again enjoy such a testimony all the days of his life. Though the Spirit be a witnessing Spirit, it is not his office every day to witness to believers their interest in God, Christ, and heaven. The Spirit doth not every day make a feast in the soul; he doth not make every day a day for wearing the wedding robes. A pardon

given unexpectedly into the hand of a malefactor when he is on the last step of the ladder, ready to be turned off, will cause much joy and rejoicing ; the newness and suddenness of the change of his condition will cause his heart to leap and rejoice ; yet in process of time much of his joy will be abated, though his life be still as dear to him as ever it was.

Or haply thy former joy and comfort sprang from the newness and suddenness of the change of thy condition. For a man in one hour to have his night turned into day, his darkness turned into light, his bitter into sweet, God's frowns into smiles, his hatred into love, his hell into a heaven, must greatly gladden and comfort him. It cannot but make his heart leap and dance. Till then he saw Satan accusing him, his own heart condemning him, the eternal God frowning upon him, the gates of heaven barred against him, all creation standing ready at the beck of God to execute vengeance, and the mouth of the infernal pit open to receive him. In such an hour, for Christ to come to the amazed soul, and say, "I have trodden the wine-press of my Father's wrath for thee ; I have laid down my life a ransom for thee ; by my blood I have satisfied my Father's justice, pacified his

anger, and procured his love for thee ; by my blood I have purchased the pardon of thy sins, thy freedom from hell, and thy right to heaven"—oh, how wonderfully will this cause the soul to leap for joy !

Remember God will restore and make up the comforts of his people. Though thy candle be put out, yet God will light it again, and make it burn brighter than ever. Though thy sun for the present be clouded, yet He who rides upon the clouds shall scatter those clouds, and cause the sun to shine and warm thy heart as in former days; as the psalmist speaks: "Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." God takes away a little comfort that he may make room for a greater degree of comfort. This the prophet Isaiah sweetly shows : "I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners" (chap. lvii. 18). Bear up, O precious soul ! thy storm will end in a calm, and thy dark night in a sunshiny day ; thy mourning shall be turned into rejoicing, and the waters of consolation shall be

sweeter and higher than ever ; the mercy is surely thine, but the time of giving it is the Lord's. Wait but a little, and thou shalt find the Lord comforting thee on every side (Psa. cxxvi. 6, and xlvi. 7, 8). Hudson the martyr, deserted at the stake, having prayed earnestly, was comforted immediately and suffered valiantly. So Mr. Glover, when he was within sight of the stake, cried out to his friend, "He is come ; he is come !" meaning the Comforter whom Christ promised to send.

Dear reader, come to Jesus Christ if you are weary of life's journey : do not seek rest from any one else. I have found it in him. Come to the throne of the heavenly grace, and you will be refreshed and strengthened by Divine grace. Come now ; come at once ; come without delay : for Jesus has said, "I will give thee rest."

I HEARD the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me, and rest :
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast."

I came to Jesus as I was—
Weary, and worn, and sad ;
I found in him a resting-place,
And he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“ Behold ! I freely give
The living water, thirsty one :
Stoop down and drink, and live.”
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream ;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“ I am this dark world’s Light :
Look unto me ; thy morn shall rise,
And all thy days be bright.”
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In him my Star, my Sun ;
And in that light of life I’ll walk
Till travelling days are done.”

PRECIOUS PROMISES.

“ I will not leave you comfortless : I will
come to you ” (*John xiv. 18*).

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. xl. 31).

"The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job xvii. 9).

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench" (Matt. xii. 20).

"The days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isa. lx. 20).

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3).

JOY FOR THE SORROWFUL.

“**W**EEPING may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa. xxx. 5). “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psa. cxxvi. 5, 6). Dear reader, what precious promises are these! They are just suited to you; they are made for you by a covenant-keeping God, by your tender and loving Father. “He is *faithful* who hath promised;” and if you could hear the testimony of the redeemed now in glory, it would be, “Not one thing hath failed of all that the Lord our God hath spoken.” Rely, therefore, upon his *faithfulness* when overwhelmed with the deepest

sorrow. Remember, he thinks upon you for good, and has shown this by giving his well-beloved Son to die for you. "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen" (2 Cor. i. 20). From Jesus every promise is derived; in him every promise centres—pardon, peace, adoption, justification, sanctification, and glorification; in him you enjoy all blessings, temporal and spiritual, and apart from him you enjoy none in the best and highest sense of the word. Keep his statutes, "that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee" (Deut. iv. 40, and v. 29). If sorrow possess your soul, you have reason to bless God for this token of his love, that he has counted you worthy to suffer. You will bless him for this participation in *the fellowship of his sufferings*, and in this fresh *conformity unto his death* (Phil. iii. 10). And you will, with one of his apostles, rejoice that in this blessed state you can *always bear "about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh"* (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11). Those believers who have most sorrow are the most highly favoured of God's family. They are less likely to be dazzled, *deluded, and misled by the vanity of the world;*

they no longer hear around them those sweet and enchanting voices which too often smother the voice of the Good Shepherd, of the best and only constant unchanging Friend ; they can no longer indulge in attachments which counteract the love of the Creator, dispute with him the throne of their hearts, and prevent his entire possession. The Saviour no longer comes to them surrounded by a train of earthly enjoyments, which they were too apt to confound with him and take for him ; but he presents himself to them without a veil, without any medium interposed, in the greatness of his power, in the splendour of his glory, that they may see him as he is, that they may love him for himself, that they may possess him wholly. Before their sorrow there was danger that they would choose all things before Christ, that the world would fully engross their attention, engage their affections, and ultimately prove their destruction, their eternal ruin ; but after their trials Christ becomes the grand object of their affections, and the chief desire of their souls. Sorrow is beneficial. If you, dear reader, have had the right experience of these things, you will be thankful for a cross as well as for a crown ; you will praise your heavenly Father

for putting the cup of sorrow into your hand, and acknowledge that sanctified trials are advantageous. By such visitations of God's providence, Christians are prepared for the abode of purity and peace.

Some of God's people have been so divinely supported in hours of sorrow that they have preferred such seasons to all the pleasures of the world. "I was called upon," says the Rev. Mr. Trefit, an American minister, "some years ago, to visit an individual a part of whose face had been eaten away by a most loathsome cancer. Fixing my eyes on this man in his agony, I said, 'Supposing that Almighty God were to give you your choice, whether you would prefer your cancer, your pain, and your sufferings, with a certainty of death before you, but of immortality hereafter; or health, prosperity, long life in the world, and the risk of losing your immortal soul?' 'Ah, sir!' said the man, 'give me the cancer, the pain, the Bible, the hope of heaven; and others may take the world, long life, and prosperity!'" Thus you see that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. viii. 28).

Every disciple must expect to be the subject,

of sorrow at times ; and in this he only resembles his Divine Master : he was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. lii. 3). Those who suffer most have most sympathy with Jesus : those who have suffered little behold Christ chiefly in his state of exaltation, and direct their thoughts principally to that. Jesus, at his baptism proclaimed the Son of God, transfigured on Mount Tabor, accomplishing by his miracles the works of omnipotence, triumphing over the grave by his glorious resurrection, and by his ascension raised to the right hand of God, is the Saviour best known to them. The Jesus of Bethlehem, of the garden of Olives, of Calvary, the man of sorrows, who knew by experience what it is to be acquainted with grief, is less attractive to them ; and, if they will reflect upon this point, and strictly search into their hearts, they will find there is something of a secret repugnance still felt by them towards that Jesus, that the reproach of the passion and folly of the cross has not been entirely removed. To love the cross and to take pleasure in it requires Divine teaching. Ask God to teach you more of himself, and more of Jesus Christ, by *sanctified sorrow*. “Our help is in the name of

the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psa. cxxiv. 8). "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour" (Prov. xxi. 21). "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Our sorrows arise from various causes: our sin is the chief source of sorrow. "We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God." How often have you and I said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There is One, and only One, who can; and that is our blessed Divine Redeemer: "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people." Be very careful not to sin that grace may abound. Many, after conversion, fall into grievous sins; they do not guard against their besetting sins, and therefore are often brought into the deepest sorrow. There is much reason for watchfulness on the part of the most eminent saints. God hath nowhere engaged himself, by any particular promise, that souls converted and united to Christ shall not fall again and again into the same sins after conversion. I cannot find in the whole book of God that he hath promised any such strength or power against this and that particular sin as that the soul shall be for ever (in

this life) beyond the possibility of falling again and again into the same sins. I would go far with that soul who can show me a promise that, when our sorrow and grief have been so great or so much for this and that sin, then God will preserve us from ever falling into the same sin. The sight of such a promise would be as life from the dead to many a precious soul who desires nothing more than to keep close to Christ, and fears nothing more than backsliding from Christ. In some cases the saints have found God better than his word. He promised the children of Israel only the land of Canaan, but, besides that, he gave them two other kingdoms which he never promised. And to Zachariah he promised to give speech at the birth of the child, but besides that he gave him the gift of prophecy. The most renowned and now crowned saints have in their days on earth relapsed into one and the same sin. Lot was often overcome with wine. John twice worshipped the angel. Abraham did often dissemble and lay his wife open to adultery to save his own life, which some heathens would not have done: "And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, *that I said unto her, This is thy kindness*

which thou shalt show unto me ; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother" (Gen. xx. 13, and chap. xii.). David, in his wrath, resolved that he would be the death of Nabal and all his innocent family, and after this he fell into the foul murder of Uriah. Though Christ told his disciples that his kingdom was not of this world, yet again and again, three several times, they would needs be on horseback ; they would fain be high, great, and glorious in the world. A sheep may often slip into a slough as well as a swine. Perhaps the prodigal sets before us a Christian relapsed ; for he was a son before, and with his father, and then went away from him and spent all ; and yet he was not quite undone, but returned again. The prodigal saw the compassion of his father to a greater degree by his receiving him after he ran away from him. The disciples' pride and ambitious humour led them (though they were but as so many beggars) to strive for pre-eminence and greatness in the world, even when their Lord and Master told them three several times of his sufferings in the world, and of his going out of it. Jehoshaphat, though a godly man, yet joins affinity with wicked Ahab (2 Chron. xviii. 1—3, 30, 31) ; and though he was saved

by a miracle, yet soon after he falls into that same sin, and “joins himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly” (chap. xx. 35—37). Samson is, by the Spirit of the Lord, numbered among the faithful worthies (Heb. xi. 32); and yet he fell into one gross sin, as is evident. Peter, you know, relapsed often, and so did Jonah; and this comes to pass that they may see their own inability to stand, to resist or overcome any temptation or corruption (Jude 14—16); and that they may be taken off from all false confidences, and rest wholly upon God, and only upon God, and always upon God; and for the praise and honour of the power, wisdom, skill, mercy, and goodness of the Physician of our souls, who can heal, help, and cure when the disease is most dangerous, when the soul is relapsed and grows worse and worse, and when others say, “There is no help for him in God,” and when his own heart and hopes are dying.

There are relapses into enormities, and there are relapses into infirmities. Now it is not usual with God to allow his people frequently to relapse into enormities; for by his Spirit and grace, by his smiles and frowns, by his word and rod, he doth easily preserve his people from

this ; yet does he suffer his choice ones to relapse into infirmities ; as idle words, passion, vain thought, &c. Though awakened souls strive against these, and complain of them, and weep over them, yet the Lord, to keep such humble, allows them frequently to relapse ; but these frequent relapses into infirmities shall never be their bane, because they are their burden.

There are involuntary relapses, and there are voluntary relapses. Involuntary relapses are when the resolution and full bent of the heart are set against sin, when the soul strives with all its might against sin, by sighs and groans, by prayers and tears, and through weakness falls into sin, because there is not spiritual strength enough to overcome. Now, though involuntary relapses must humble us, yet they must never discourage nor deject us; for God will freely and readily pardon them. Voluntary relapses are when the soul longs and loves to return to the flesh-pots of Egypt ; when it is a pleasure and a pastime for a man to return to his old courses. Such voluntary relapses declare the man blinded, hardened, and ripened for ruin.

Some sin voluntarily and some involuntarily—some through weakness, some deliberately. But know that it is very rare God doth allow his

beloved ones frequently to relapse into one and the same gross sin ; for the law of nature is in arms against gross sins, as well as the law of grace ; so that a gracious soul cannot, dare not, will not frequently return to gross folly. And God hath made even his dearest ones smart for their relapses, as may be seen by his dealings with Samson, Jehoshaphat, and Peter. Ah, Lord ! what a hard heart hath that man that can see thee chastising thy dearest ones for their relapses, and yet make nothing of returning to folly !

Beware of sin ; for it will destroy your peace in life, and your soul in death. Indulgence in sin will bring bitter sorrow upon you. Turn from all evil ways ; for "verily there is a reward for the righteous" (Psa. lviii. 11). "Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous ; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield" (Psa. v. 12).

Those Christians who are filled with the greatest joy while living and when dying are those who live nearest to God. The more you are acquainted with God while you live, the more willing you will be to die, to go to him ; for death, to a child of God, is nothing else but a resting with God, in whose bosom he hath often been by holy meditation when he was

alive. Dr. Preston when he was dying used these words : “Blessed be God, though I change my place, I shall not change my company ; for I have walked with God while living, and now I go to rest with God.”

Dear reader, if you are now in deep sorrow on account of sin, if you have fallen into gross sins, repent, and look to the Saviour, who has said, “I will give thee rest.” Approach the throne of grace, and present some such prayer as the following :—

O most holy Lord God! when I seriously reflect on thy spotless purity, and on the strict and impartial methods of thy steady administration, together with that almighty power which is able to carry every thought of thine heart into immediate and full execution, I may justly appear before thee this day with shame and terror, in confusion and consternation of spirit. This day, O my God, this dark, mournful day, would I take occasion to look back to that sad source of our guilt and our misery, the apostasy of our common parents, and say, with thine offending servant David, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” This day would *I lament* all the fatal consequences of such a

descent with regard to myself. And oh, how many have my sins been ! The remembrance of the sins of my unconverted state, and the failings and infirmities of my after-life, may justly confound me. How much more such a scene as now lies before my conscience, and before thine all-seeing eye ! For thou, O Lord, "knowest my foolishness ; and my sins are not hid from thee." Thou tellest all my wanderings from thy statutes : thou seest and thou recordest every instance of my disobedience to thee, and of my rebellion against thee ; thou seest it in every aggravated circumstance which I can discern, and in many more which I have never observed or reflected upon. How, then, shall I appear in thy presence, or lift up my face to thee ? I am full of confusion, and feel a secret regret in the thought of applying to thee ; but, O Lord, to whom should I go but unto thee—unto thee, on whom depends my life or my death ; who alone canst take away the burden of guilt which now presses me down to the dust ; who alone canst restore to my soul that rest and peace which I have lost, and which I deserve for ever to lose ?

Behold me, O Lord God, falling down at thy feet ! Behold me pleading guilty in thy presence, *and surrendering myself to that justice which I*

cannot escape ! I have not one word to offer in my own vindication, in my own excuse. Words, far from being able to clear up my innocence, can never sufficiently describe the enormity and demerit of my sin. Thou, O Lord, and thou only, knowest to the full how heinous and how aggravated it is. Thine infinite understanding alone can fathom the infinite depth of its malignity. I am, on many accounts, most unable to do it. I cannot conceive the glory of thy sacred majesty, whose authority I have despised, nor the number and variety of those mercies which I have sinned against. I cannot conceive the value of the blood of thy dear Son, which I have ungratefully trampled under my feet ; nor the dignity of that blessed Spirit of thine, whose agency I have, as far as I could, been endeavouring to oppose, and whose work I have been, as with all my might, labouring to undo, and to tear up, as it were, that plantation of his grace which I should rather have been willing to have guarded with my life and watered with my blood. Oh the baseness and madness of my conduct ! that I should thus, as it were, rend open the wounds of my soul, of which I had died long ere this, had not thine own hand *applied a remedy*, had not thine only Son bled

to prepare it ! that I should violate the covenant I have made with thee by sacrifice, by the memorials of such a sacrifice, too, even of Jesus, my Lord, whereby I am become guilty of his body and blood ! that I should bring such dishonour upon religion, too, by so unsuitable a walk, and perhaps open the mouths of its greatest enemies to insult it upon my account, and prejudice some against it, to their everlasting destruction ! O Lord, pardon and save me, for Jesus' sake.

If thou shouldst see fit to make me a warning to others, by appointing that I should walk all my days in darkness, and at last die under a cloud, thy will be done ! But, O God, extend mercy, for thy Son's sake, to this sinful soul at last ! and give me some place, though it were at the feet of all thine other servants, in the regions of glory ! Oh bring me at length, though it should be through the gloomiest valley that any have ever passed, into that blessed world where I shall depart from God no more ; where I shall wound my own conscience and dishonour thy holy name no more. Then shall my tongue be loosed, how long soever it might here be bound under the confusion of guilt; and immortal praises *shall be paid to that victorious blood which has*

redeemed such an infamous slave of sin as I must acknowledge myself to be, and brought me, from bondage and repeated pollution, to share the dignity and holiness of those who are “kings and priests unto God.” Amen.

Sorrow arises oftentimes from personal and domestic affliction, and from bereavement. It may be that you, dear reader, are labouring under very painful bodily disease; if so, you must strive to bear the will of your Father: you must be his passive servant when you cannot be active, and in the one situation he can by his grace enable you to glorify him as much as in the other. Your affliction is sent for your good: this you will soon discover. Be still, have faith, and your heavenly Father will in his own good time hear your cry for relief. “The desire of the righteous shall be granted” (Prov. x. 24). The heavier your affliction, the stronger and livelier should be your faith. Hope on, and hope still. Though clouds and darkness be round about you, still do not yield to unbelief or despair. For “the hope of the righteous shall be gladness” (Prov. x. 28). “A good man obtaineth favour of the Lord” (Prov. xii. 2).

Whilst the Lord doth not put upon us *more* than we are able to bear, we have no room to complain ; and *that* he never *did*, nor *will* do : he loves his children too well. Few suffered severer trials than Paul ; but he calls them “light afflictions.” To flesh and blood trials and afflictions are indeed grievous ; and corrupt nature is apt, too apt, to murmur and complain under them. But I firmly believe that we shall this side the grave experience but few things that are in reality greater blessings to us, through the love and goodness of our gracious Father. When our warfare is ended, we shall then see that what our short-sighted ignorance once called adversities or trials were in reality gracious blessings ; that nothing befell us without cause ; that no trouble came on us *sooner*, or pressed on us *more heavily*, or continued with us *longer*, than our case required. We shall then be fully sensible that our many afflictions were each in their place the means employed by God’s wisdom and grace to fit, prepare, and bring us to the possession of that “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him. We cannot too well consider nor too firmly believe the *passage* — “All things work together for

good to them that love God." But how is that? Why, Christ, who is their Head, knows how to turn everything to their advantage; and so *all* things, without any exception, must *infallibly* work for their good.

Is it not to our honour to bear the cross? Did not our dear Redeemer bear it before us? Yes, and took out of it all its bitterness for us. And surely it is the highest honour we can be capable of here on earth, to be in this respect *conformed* to him, in whose footsteps we are to tread. If we meet with crosses and afflictions, let us not forget that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." *Light afflictions* are as so many *artificers* sent by Providence to make the crown of the believer more massive and bright. They are at work, and make him smart; but, at the same time, they are at work about his *crown*. It would be a sovereign support under all the changes and chances of this life could we look on them always in this view.

How can that soul be discouraged or discomfited which sees that, in every case, all is ministering to its advancement in holiness and greater fitness for glory? No; when a soul

which, as it may be supposed, truly loves God, and hungers and thirsts after righteousness, *faints* and *complains* under trials and troubles, it is either because it prefers ease to growth in grace (which I believe to be at times the sad case of a true believer), and would be better pleased to be *quiet* than to be holy (which is also sometimes the case, though a very bad sign), or else because it is not at *that* time steadfastly believing that trial is sent to promote its spiritual good. We ought not, as Christians, to think that anything falls out to us by chance, but to be perfectly sensible that every, even the *minutest* circumstance attending us is under the Divine direction, and that in the *nicest exactness* to the wants of our souls. Those who have their senses exercised to a spiritual discernment of the ways of Providence clearly discover this in past dispensations; and they see it with admiration and thankfulness. It is therefore no wonder that such an enlightened soul should draw hence the strongest arguments for resignation and thankfulness under every pressing trial and temptation.

We are under *His* care "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He must, therefore, know better than we the

plague of our hearts, the subtleties of our corruptions, the strongholds on which sin leans, the devices of Satan and of every other enemy. He must also of necessity know the most effectual mode of mortifying corruption, of strengthening grace, of disappointing the designs of our spiritual enemies, and of making everything work for his people's good and advancement. Let him carry on his blessed work, and make use of what means his wisdom thinks proper. If we feel his hand at work within us, it is all well. We have his infallible word to depend on that we shall not be tempted or tried *above* what we are able to bear. Oh, what provision is there in the Scriptures for our peace and comfort! Precious promises! they are of more value to a guilty sinner than worlds of the richest mines. Let us therefore continue to give *all* diligence in the use of *all* means, and wait patiently upon God; and be most perfectly assured that, in his own *good* time, He "whom you are willing to plead to be your Sun" *will* shine on you in his own great splendour and glory. "He will turn again, he will have compassion on us" (Mic. vii. 19).

"Light is *sown* for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Doth the husbandman,

after he casts his seed into the earth, immediately, the next day, the next week, expect it will be harvest? No; he "*waiteth*," as St. James says, "and hath *long* patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." And is light *sown* for them that are in darkness? and shall they refuse to *wait* for the watering and the dews of the Spirit, which may bring it forth unto perfection? No. With pleasure I hear you reply, "If I perish, may I perish *waiting* for his salvation, and the light of his countenance." It is a noble resolution. Light is *certainly sown*. Wait, and it will spring up; it will shine with effulgent splendour: darkness will flee before it, and be dispersed. It will shine "more and more unto the perfect day." It is as much our duty to *wait patiently* the fulfilment of God's promises as to *believe* the truth of them. *Impatience* and *weariness* are enemies which we must be very watchful against. If we continue to wait for the vision of peace, it will come; it will not tarry long. But God is not to be limited, nor his times prescribed to him. We know our *way*, and the end of our journey; but as to our stations of special rest, we must wait till God points them out, as he did to the Israelites in the **wilderness.**

Sorrows arise from bereavements : the most bitter sorrow is experienced by relations and friends when loved ones are taken from our side. Our Lord shed tears of sympathy ; he wept at the grave of Lazarus. It is no sin to weep. Who has not shed the tear of affection when death has entered the happy home, closed the sparkling eye, hushed the sweet voice, and with paleness painted, for ever, the once beautifully flushed cheek ? Who can tell the anguish of the soul when death removes the mother's pride and the father's joy ? How mournful the echo of that cry, as it rings through the air, " Me have ye bereaved of my children : Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." A mother's joy and a mother's sorrow baffle the power of language to describe. I have seen the noble sire bowed down with grief, while the faithful companion of his bosom was carried to her last long home ; and I have prayed that some ministering angel might heal the breach, might gently whisper, " Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes ; neither shalt thou mourn." I have seen the strong man follow his loved one to the grave, and there, with his hard, rough hand, wipe the sparkling tear from his eye. Words of comfort

I have spoken, and in return received a grasp from that honest hand. The Lord "raiseth up all those that be bowed down" (Psa. cxlv. 14). I have seen the affectionate wife watching anxiously the breathing of her beloved partner in his dying hour. I have seen her profusion of tears, felt her grasp of the hand in her frantic moments of despair, and heard her cry of deep sorrow coming from her inmost soul, "What shall I do? Oh! tell me what I shall do." All I could say in reply was, "Look to Jesus. Your sorrow is beyond expression; the breach now made is great indeed; the departed one's love was great, but not so great as the love of Jesus: go and tell Jesus all your sorrow, and He who turned the widow's sorrow into joy by restoring her son to life will turn your sorrow into joy by giving you the life of your soul. God's presence can more than fill the room of the lost one. May you desire that more and more."

I have seen the sweet laughing babe filled with innocent glee as the loving mother played with and fondled it. I have seen death come and touch with his icy hand the pretty flower, and immediately it withered. The once joyous mother stood by the grave and *dropt* tear after tear upon the little one's

coffin. In the bitterness of soul she cried out, "My child, my child, would to God I could lie down in the cold grave with thee!" I gently whispered, as I passed by, "You have not to sorrow as those who have no hope. 'Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.'" "What shall I do?" she cried, as her soul was wrung with anguish. My reply was, "Look to Jesus; look to the blessed Saviour, who has said, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you' (John xiv. 18). Your trial is great: go and tell Jesus." It is your duty, dear reader, to meditate much and often upon life and the hour of death. Enter the churchyards, examine the records of mortality, and prepare for a future life. Yonder white stone, emblem of the innocence it covers, tells the beholder of one who breathed out his tender soul almost in the instant of receiving it. There the peaceful infant, without so much as knowing what labour and vexation mean, lies still and is quiet; it sleeps and is at rest (Job iii. 13). Happy voyager! no sooner launched than arrived at the haven!

"Happy the babe who, privileged by fate
To shorter labour and to lighter weight,
Received but yesterday the gift of breath,
Ordered to-morrow to return to death."

But more eminently happy are they who have passed the waves and weathered all the storms of a troublesome and dangerous world ; who, "through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God," and thereby bring honour to their Divine teacher, administer comfort to the companions of their toil, and leave an instructing example to succeeding pilgrims.

Why should ye sorrow, ye mourning parents, since your little ones are crowned with victory before the sword is drawn or the conflict begun ? Perhaps the supreme Disposer of events foresaw some inevitable snare of temptation forming, or some dreadful storm of adversity impending. And why should ye be so dissatisfied with that kind precaution which housed your pleasant plant and removed into shelter a tender flower before the thunders roared, before the lightnings flew, before the tempest poured its rage ? Oh, remember ! they are not lost, but "taken away from the evil to come " (Isa. lvii. 1).

Here lies the grief of a fond mother and the blasted expectation of an indulgent father. The youth grew up like a well-watered plant ; he shot deep, rose high, and bid fair for manhood. But, just as the cedar began to tower, and promised *ere long to be the pride of the wood and prince*

among the neighbouring trees, behold ! the axe is laid unto the root, the fatal blow struck, and all its branching honours tumbled to the dust. And did he fall alone ? No ; the hopes of his father that begat him, and the pleasing prospects of her that bare him, fell, and were together crushed.

Doubtless it would have pierced one's heart to have beheld the tender parents following the breathless youth to his long home. Perhaps, drowned in tears and all overwhelmed with sorrows, they stood, like weeping statues, on this very spot. Methinks I see the deeply distressed mourners attending the sad solemnity. How they wring their hands and pour floods from their eyes ! Is it fancy ? or do I really hear the passionate mother in an agony of affliction taking her final leave of the darling of her soul ? Dumb she remained while the awful obsequies were performing ; dumb with grief, and leaning upon the partner of her woes. But now the inward anguish struggles for vent ; it grows too big to be repressed. She advances to the brink of the grave. All her soul is in her eyes. She fastens one more look upon the dear doleful object, before the pit shuts its *mouth upon him.* And as she looks she

cries—in broken accents, interrupted by many a rising sob, “Farewell, my son ! my son ! my only beloved ! Would to God I had died for thee ! Farewell, my child ! and farewell all my earthly happiness ! I shall never more see good in the land of the living. Attempt not to comfort me. I will go mourning all my days, till my gray hairs come down with sorrow to the grave.”

From this affecting representation let parents be convinced how highly it concerns them to cultivate the morals, and secure the immortal interests, of their children. If you really love the offspring of your own bodies, if your bowels yearn over those amiable pledges of conjugal endearment, spare no pains ; give all diligence, I entreat you, to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Then may you have joy in their life, or consolation in their death. If their span is prolonged, their unblamable conduct will be the staff of your age, and a balm for declining nature. Or, if the number of their years be cut off in the midst, you may commit their remains to the dust with cheering hopes of again receiving them to your arms.

It is certainly a severe trial to resign a lovely,

blooming creature, sprung from your own loins, to the gloomy recesses of corruption, and to resign him, after having been long dandled upon your knees, united to your affections by a thousand ties of tenderness, and now become both the delight of your eyes and the support of your family ! To have such an one torn from your bosom and thrown into darkness must be like a dagger in your hearts. But oh ! how much more cutting to you, and confounding to the child, to have the soul separated from God, and, for shameful ignorance or early impiety, transmitted to places of eternal torment ! How it would aggravate your distress, and add a distracting emphasis to all your sighs, if you should follow the pale corpse with these bitter reflections :— “This dear creature, though long ago capable of knowing good from evil, is gone out of the world before it had learned the great design of coming into it. A short-lived, momentary existence it received from me ; but no good instructions, no holy admonitions, nothing to further its well-being in that everlasting state upon which it is now entered. The poor body is consigned to the coffin, and carried out to *consume away* in the cold and silent grave.

And what reason have I to suppose that the precious soul is in a better condition ? May I not justly fear that, sentenced by the righteous Judge, it is going or gone away into the pains of endless punishment ? Perhaps while I am bewailing its untimely departure it may be cursing, in outer darkness, that ever-to-be-deplored, that most calamitous day when it was born of such a careless, ungodly parent as I have been." How earnestly do I wish that as many as are intrusted with the management of children would take timely care to prevent these scourges of conscience, by endeavouring to lead their minds to an early knowledge of Christ and a cordial love of his truth !

May we all love Jesus more than all the world besides. The dying love of Christ should be our most frequent, our most joyful theme ; love to this wonderful Saviour should be the supreme passion of our souls ; our attachment to the doctrines of salvation through the Redeemer should be ardent, sincere, and unchangeable. In order to enjoy true happiness we must be united to Christ ; we must be well persuaded of our reconciliation with him, and of being in favour with God. " His loving-kindness is better than life" itself. The more

holy a man is, the more of God's favour will he enjoy, and the happier he will be.

Dear reader, if you are bowed down with sorrow, go and tell Jesus ; do not go to earthly friends : "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Go to the best Friend, who "sticketh closer than a brother ;" who has said, "Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 4).

When sorrow presses the soul down, great faith is necessary. Saving faith is, in the nature of it, not a mere assent to a testimony, but a receiving and resting upon the person of Jesus Christ alone for all salvation, both from *sin* and wrath, and unto all the grace and glory of God. This faith, according to the measure of it, produces the peace of God in the heart, and, when exercised, infallibly works by love, overcomes the world, and is productive of every good fruit ; while he who professes to be a believer in Christ, and has not felt in himself the workings of the Spirit of God thereby, and doth not bring forth the fruits above mentioned, is to be judged as a self-deceiver, and his profession disregarded.

Sorrowing Christian, let this be your prayer : "Lord, increase my faith. Save me from un-

belief. Make me understand that ‘all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth’ (Psa. xxv. 10). Enable me to look beyond this vale of tears to the mansions of the blest. How great will be the bliss, how divine the enjoyments, when, through Jesus, the living Way, I shall be introduced into the heavenly Jerusalem, join the innumerable company of angels, and take some humble place among the spirits of just men—*just men*, no longer frail and imperfect, but holy, and made perfect even as He which has called them is perfect!” Tell the blessed Saviour all your sorrows. “I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow” (Jer. xxxi. 13). “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psa. xlvi. 1). “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up” (Hos. vi. 1).

WHY walk in darkness? Has the dear light
vanished
That gave us joy and day?
Has the great Sun departed? Has sin banished
His life-begetting ray?

Light of the world ! for ever, ever shining,
There is no change in thee :
True light of life, all joy and health enshrining,
Thou canst not fade nor flee.

Thou hast arisen ; but thou descendest never ;
To-day shines as the past ;
All thou wast, thou art, and shalt be ever—
Brightness from first to last !

Night visits not thy sky, nor storm, nor sadness :
Day fills up all its blue ;
Unfailing beauty, and unfalt'ring gladness,
And love for ever new !

Why walk in darkness ? Our true Light yet
shineth :
It is not night, but day !
All healing and all peace his light enshrineth :
Why shun his loving ray ?

Are night and shadows better, truer, dearer,
Than day, and joy, and love ?
Do tremblings and misgivings bring us nearer
To the great God of love ?

Light of the world ! undimming and unsetting,
Oh, drive each mist away !
Banish the fear, the falsehood, and the fretting ;
Be our unchanging Day !

PRECIOUS PROMISES.

“God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ” (Rev. xxi. 3, 4).

“When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away ” (1 Pet. v. 4).

“Their soul shall be as a watered garden ; and they shall not sorrow any more at all ” (Jer. xxxi. 12).

“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble ” (Psa. ix. 9).

“The just shall come out of trouble ” (Prov. xii. 13).

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee : he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved ” (Psa. lv. 22).

COMFORT FOR THE AFFLICTED.

“BLESSED are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted” (Matt. v. 4). This gracious promise is of more value to the afflicted soul than many worlds ; it is a word fallen from the bosom of eternal love into the depths of our miseries. God only could utter it : those who are in trouble are the only beings able to understand it. For them it possesses a hidden beauty, a Divine attraction ; it contains inexhaustible treasures of peace and consolation. The Saviour promises comfort to every penitent soul, and proclaims the felicity of such. “Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.” “Waters of a full cup are wrung out to” some of the Lord’s people. Many are their *afflictions*. Through much tribulation they press

forward towards the world of eternal rest. Millions in glory can say, "We went through fire and through water : but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." "These are they which came out of great tribulation." The afflictions of the saints arise from various sources—*from Satan, from the world, from themselves, and from God*; yet all are necessary for them. "If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." If the Lord bring his people into the fire, it is not to consume them, but to refine them. The trials of Christians are some of their greatest mercies. God makes them fruitful in his ways by means of sanctified afflictions. "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." God loves those most whom he afflicts the most. I am thankful for all the afflictions which have come upon me ; I am fully satisfied that they were all sent in love, and that I am the better for them. If God thinks fit to deprive his children of sight, or of any other sense, they should not rebel, but remember that the rod of chastisement is held in their Father's hand. A blind boy belonging to the institution in Dublin, when dying, assured a person that he considered it as one of the greatest mercies of Heaven that he had been

deprived of his sight, because this was the means the Lord employed to bring him under the sound of the Gospel, which was now the joy and rejoicing of his soul. Much wisdom and truth is there in the beautiful language of the poet—

“ Good when he gives, supremely good,
Nor less when he denies,
E'en crosses from his sovereign hand
Are blessings in disguise.”

Those spirits now in the character of “fallen angels,” it is contended, were tempted to do evil by the devil; but of this we have no positive evidence. His influence, however, over our first parents is not involved in such contingency; and the circumstance of their having yielded to the temptation smoothed the way for more easy access in future to the human mind. Every believer, therefore, should be on his guard, or Satan will afflict him with temptations. The devil has extensive, but not infinite knowledge; he knows what is the besetting sin of every man, and, like the enemy on the battle-field, he attacks the weakest part. His knowledge is, unquestionably, limited by its nature. Being but a spirit, he cannot, of course, possess more extensive faculties than like existences.

Holy angels, we are told, with all their excursive and high intelligence, are not fitted for comprehending the counsels of Omnipotence; and it cannot be for a moment questioned, if *their* knowledge be thus limited, that a self-degraded being like the devil can be possessed of more acute and comprehensive faculties. On the Mount of Olives, whilst foretelling the second advent, and the glory there to be revealed in the heavens, with great power, Jesus said, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father;” thus proving incontrovertibly that infinity of knowledge is the attribute of God alone. No Christian need fear the knowledge and power of Satan, because the Lord is on his side; at the same time it behoves every one to gird up the loins of his mind, to watch and be sober unto the end, seeing that the “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” Though man be by nature “dead in trespasses and sins,” he is, nevertheless, a free moral agent, and endowed with intellectual faculties sufficiently capable of successfully using the means which God has appointed to *emancipate him from the powers of sin and*

hell; thus, then, the power of the devil can only be exercised persuasively.

Alas! alas! how few, comparatively speaking, act as though they believed this! Mankind in general resemble the devil. There are spiritual sins; and from these, in their height, the Scripture teaches us to judge of Satan's character. Every feature of this description is strong in man; so that what our Lord said to the Jews is of general application, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Man resembles Satan in *pride*: this stupid, wicked creature values himself upon his wisdom, power, and virtue, and talks of being saved by his good works; yet, if this were true, Satan himself need not despair. He resembles him in *malice*; and this diabolical disposition often proceeds to murder, and would daily, if the Lord did not restrain it. He derives from Satan the hateful spirit of *envy*: he is often tormented beyond expression by beholding the prosperity of his neighbours, and proportionably pleased with their calamities, though he gains no other advantage from them than the gratification of this rancorous principle. He bears the image of Satan in his *cruelty*; and a disposition to give *pain to others* appears very early. Children, if

left to themselves, soon feel a gratification in torturing insects and animals. How much cruelty has man practised upon man ! How much more cruelty has man displayed towards the weaker vessel, whom he should have honoured, protected, and preserved from the deception of his own heart, the chilling taunts of the off-scouring of society, and the withering blasts of a cruel world ! If *deceit* and *treachery* belong to Satan's character, then surely man resembles him. Is not the universal observation and complaint of all ages an affecting comment upon the prophet's words, "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide : keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom"? How many have at this moment cause to say with David, "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart : his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords"! Have nothing to do with Satan, little to do with ungodly men, but much to do with God. You cannot help Satan tempting and distressing you ; at the same time you may rejoice that God has given you power to resist him. Satan has tried many of God's saints most severely, but they have been more than conquerors through Him who hath loved them.

Chrysostom, when in exile, says, “When driven from the city, I cared nothing for it; but I said to myself, If the Empress wishes to banish me, the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof. If she would saw me in sunder, let her saw me in sunder: I have Isaiah for a pattern. If she would plunge me in the sea, I remember Jonah. If she would thrust me into the fiery furnace, I see the three children enduring that. If she would cast me to wild beasts, I call to mind Daniel in the den of lions. If she would stone me, let her stone me: I have before me Stephen the protomartyr. If she would take my head from me, let her take it: I have John the Baptist. If she would deprive me of my worldly goods, let her do it: naked came I from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. An apostle has told me, ‘God respecteth no man’s person;’ and if I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ.” Even Gibbon cannot refrain from remarking that these epistles “show a firmness of mind much superior to that of Cicero in his exile.”

Afflictions come from the world. Men tempt each other to sin: not content to destroy their own souls, they employ all their arts and influence to draw as many as they can with them

into the torments of hell. How wonderful is the love of God in giving his Son to die for such wretches ! and how strong and absolute is the necessity of the new birth if we would be happy ! Can devils inherit the kingdom of God ? Never : man must be changed, regenerated, created anew in Christ Jesus, or he can never enter heaven. The propensities of fallen nature are not eradicated from the children of God while they live, though by grace they are made partakers of a new principle which enables them, in the Lord's strength, to resist and mortify the body of sin so that it cannot reign in them ; yet they are liable to sad surprises. And the histories of Aaron, David, Solomon, and Peter are left on record to teach us what evil is latent in the hearts of the best men, and what they are capable of doing if left to themselves. May you never be left to yourself. Ask Divine guidance, and a gracious preparation for life, for death, and for heaven.

Ordinarily there is no conquest over sin. It is impossible for man to gain a conquest over sin while he plays and sports with the occasions of sin. It is a just and righteous thing with God that they should fall into the pit who will venture to dance upon the brink of it, and that

they should be slaves to sin who will not flee from the occasions of sin. As long as there is fuel in our hearts for a temptation, we cannot be secure : he that hath gunpowder about him had need keep far off from sparks. To venture near sin is both to tempt ourselves and to tempt Satan to tempt our souls. It is rarely that any soul trifles with sin without being ensnared by it. He that adventures upon the occasions of sin is as he that would quench the fire with oil, which is fuel to maintain and increase it. The fable saith that the butterfly asked the owl how he should deal with the fire which had singed her wings. He counselled her not to *behold* so much as its smoke. Ah, souls ! often remember how frequently you have been overcome by sin when you have boldly gone upon the occasions of sin ; look back, souls, to the day of your vanity, wherein you have been as easily conquered as tempted, vanquished as assaulted, when you have played with the occasions of sin. As you would for the future be kept from the acting of sin, and be made victorious over sin, oh, flee from the occasions of sin !

Seriously consider that other precious saints, once honourable on earth, and now triumphing in heaven, turned from the occasions of sin as

from hell itself. "And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her" (Gen. xxxix. 10). Joseph was famous for the four cardinal virtues, if ever any were. In this one temptation you may see his fortitude, justice, temperance, and prudence, in that he shuns the occasion (for he would not so much as be with her). There are stories of heathens that would not look upon excellent beauties, lest they should be ensnared. Democritus plucked out his own eyes to avoid the danger of uncleanness. The Nazarite might not only not drink wine, but not taste a grape or the husk of a grape. The leper was to shave his hair and pare his nails. The devil counts a fit occasion half a conquest; for he knows that corrupt nature hath a seed-plot of all sin, which, being watered by some sinful occasion, soon produces death and destruction. God will not remove the temptation till we remove the occasion. A bird whilst aloft is safe; but she comes not near the snare without danger. Shunning occasions of sin renders a man most like the best of men. "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job xxxi. 1). I set a watch at

the entrance of my senses, that my soul might not by them be infected and endangered. The eye is the window of the soul ; and if that should be always open, the soul might smart for it. A man may not look intently upon that that he may not love entirely. It is best and safest to have the eye always fixed upon the highest and noblest object, as the mariner's eye is fixed upon the compass when his hand is on the helm. So David, when himself, shunned the occasion of sin : "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers ; and will not sit with the wicked" (Psa. xxvi. 4, 5).

Dear reader, strive against sin in any form. Consider that sin is but a bitter sweet ; the seeming sweet that is in sin will quickly vanish, and bring lasting shame, sorrow, horror, and terror in its room. When the golden bait is cast forth to catch us, we must say, as Demosthenes the orator did of the beautiful Laïs, when he was asked an excessive sum of money to behold her, "I will not buy repentance so dear : I am not so ill a merchant as to sell eternals for temporals." "Though wickedness *be sweet* in his mouth, though he hide it under

his tongue ; though he spare it, and forsake it not ; but keep it still within his mouth : yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him" (Job xx. 12—14). Forbidden profits and pleasures are most pleasing to vain men, who count madness mirth. Many eat on earth to digest in hell. Adam's apple was a bitter sweet ; Esau's mess was a bitter sweet, the Israelites' quails a bitter sweet, Jonathan's honey a bitter sweet, and Adonijah's dainties a bitter sweet. After the meal is ended comes the reckoning. Men must not expect to dance and dine with the devil, and then to sup with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; to feed upon the poison of asps, and not be slain thereby.

Therefore, whenever troubled by Satan, flee to the Saviour for shelter and comfort. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). Afflictions come from God ; they are sent to the children by their gracious and loving Father ; he sees it necessary to afflict the children of men in various ways. " Happy is the man whom God correcteth : therefore despise not thou the chastening of the

Almighty : for he maketh sore, and bindeth up : he woundeth, and his hands make whole" (Job v. 17, 18). God led his people of old through a desert land : many were their dangers and trials ; but it was the right way ; it was that they might go to a city of habitation. There is a day coming when God's afflicted saints shall leave this body of sin and death, shall shake off all their ailments, and both vessel and cargo be landed safely on the shores of the heavenly Canaan. Not a hair of their heads shall be hurt, and not a single regret shall be heard that too many afflictions have been borne, that too many waves beat upon the little bark : all will fully appreciate their heavenly Father's good intentions in chastising them, and strive to outvie each other in shouting, "Thou hast done all things well."

It was a speech of Guspar Olevianus, a German divine, in his sickness : "In this disease I have learned how great God is, and what the evil of sin is : I never knew so fully what God was before." Afflictions are a crystal glass, wherein the soul hath the clearest sight of the ugly face of sin. In this glass the soul comes to see sin to be a bitter sweet ; yea, in this glass the soul comes to see sin not only to

be an evil, but to be the greatest evil in the world.

Afflictions contribute to the mortifying and purging away of sins. (Isa. i. 25, and xxvii. 8, 9.) Afflictions are God's furnace, by which he cleanses his people from their dross. Affliction is a fire to purge out our dross, and to make virtue shine; it is a potion to carry away ill-humours, better than all the Benedicta Medicamentum, as physicians call them. Aloes kill worms, colds and frosts destroy vermin; so do afflictions the corruptions that are in our hearts. In times of peace our armour is rusty; in times of war it is bright. Salt brine preserves from putrefaction, and salt marshes keep the sheep from the rot: so do afflictions the saints from sin. The Jews, under all the prophets' thundering, retained their idols; but after their Babylonish captivity it is to be observed that there have been no idols found amongst them.

Afflictions are sweet preservatives to keep the saints from sin. Job spake (chap. xxxiv. 31, 32): "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." Once have I spoken foolishly, yea, twice; but I will do so no

more. The burnt child dreads the fire. "Ah!" saith the soul under the rod, "sin is but a bitter sweet; and for the future I intend, by the strength of Christ, that I will not buy repentance at so dear a rate."

The rabbins, to scare their scholars from sin, were wont to tell them that sin made God's head ache; and saints under the rod have found, by woeful experience, that sin makes not only their heads, but their hearts ache also.

Augustine, by wandering out of his way, escaped one that lay in wait to do him harm. If afflictions did not put us out of our way, we should many times meet with some sin or other that would injure our precious souls.

Afflictions will make the saints more fruitful in holiness: "But he [afflicts us] for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. xii. 10, 11). The flowers smell sweetest after a shower, vines bear the better for bleeding, the walnut-tree is most fruitful when most beaten; saints spring and thrive most internally when they are most externally afflicted. Afflictions are called by some the mother of virtue. Luther could not understand some Scriptures till he was in affliction. *Schola crucis schola lucis* (God's house

of correction is his school of instruction). All the stones that came about Stephen's ears did but force him closer to Christ, the Corner-stone. The waves did but lift Noah's ark nearer to heaven ; and the higher the waters grew, the nearer the ark was lifted up to heaven. Afflictions lift the soul to richer, clearer, and fuller enjoyments of God. "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her;" or rather, as the Hebrew has it, "I will earnestly (or vehemently) speak to her heart" (Hos. ii. 14). God makes afflictions to be inlets to the soul's fuller enjoyment of his blessed self. It is reported of Tiberius the emperor that, passing by a place where he saw a cross lying on the ground upon a marble stone, he caused the stone to be dug up, and found a great deal of treasure under the cross. So many a precious saint has found much spiritual and heavenly treasure under the crosses he has met withal. When was it that Stephen saw the heavens open, and Christ standing at the right hand of God, but when the stones were about his ears, and there was but a short step betwixt him and eternity ? And when did God appear in his glory to Jacob but in the day of his troubles,

when the stones were his pillows, and the ground his bed, and the hedges his curtains, and the heavens his canopy? Then he saw the angels of God ascending and descending in their glistering robes.

Afflictions serve to keep the hearts of the saints humble and tender. “Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me,” or “bowed down in me,” as the original has it (Lam. iii. 19, 20). So David, when he was under the rod, could say, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”

I have read of one who, when anything fell out prosperously, would read over the Lamentations of Jeremiah; and that kept his heart tender, humble, and low. Prosperity does not contribute more to the puffing up of the soul than adversity does to the bowing down of the soul. This the saints by experience find, and therefore they can kiss and embrace the cross as others do the world’s crown.

Afflictions serve to bring the saints nearer to God, and to make them more importunate and earnest in prayer with God. “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy

word." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psa. cxix. 67, 71). "I will be to Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah : I, even I, will tear and go away ; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face : in their affliction they will seek me early." And so they did : "Come," say they, "and let us return unto the Lord : for he hath torn, and he will heal us ; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us : in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight" (Hos. v. 14, 15 ; vi. 1, 2). The more precious odours and pure spices are beaten and bruised, the sweeter scent and savour they send abroad ; so do saints when they are afflicted, and when God hath hedged up their way with thorns, they say, "I will go and return to my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now." Ah ! the joy, the peace, the comfort, the delight, and the content that did attend us when we kept close communion with God do bespeak our return to him. We will return to our first husband ; for then was it with us better than now.

When Tiribazus, a noble Persian, was arrested, he drew out his sword and defended himself ; but when they told him that they came to carry him to the king, he willingly yielded : so, though a saint may at first stand out, yet when he remembers that afflictions are to carry him nearer to God, he yields and kisses the rod. Most men are like a top, that will not go unless you whip it ; and the more you whip it the better it goes. Apply this to your own case. "They that are in adversity," saith Luther, "do better understand Scriptures ; but those that are in prosperity read them as a verse in Ovid."

Afflictions serve to revive and recover decayed graces ; they inflame the love that is cold, they quicken the faith that is decaying, they put life into those hopes that are withering, and spirit into those joys and comforts that are languishing. "Musk," saith one, "when it hath lost its sweetness, if it be put into the sink amongst filth, it recovers it ;" so do afflictions recover and revive decayed graces. The more saints are beaten with the scourge of afflictions, the more they are made the trumpets of God's praises, and the more are their graces revived and quickened. Adversity abases the loveliness of the world that might entice us ; it abases the

lustfulness of the flesh that is within, that might entice us to folly and vanity.

Now suppose that afflictions and troubles do attend the ways of holiness, yet, seeing that they all work for the great profit and singular advantage of the saints, let no soul be so mad as to leave an afflicted way of holiness to walk in a smooth path of wickedness.

All the afflictions that befall the saints only reach their worse part; they hurt not their noble part, their best part: all the arrows stick in the target; they do not seriously injure the conscience. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" saith the apostle. That is, none will harm you: they may afflict, but they shall never harm you. The Christian soldier shall ever be master of the day. *Mori posse, vinci non posse*, said Cyprian to Cornelius (He may suffer death, but never conquest).

A heathen, when ordered by the tyrant to be put into a mortar and to be beaten to pieces with an iron pestle, cried out to his persecutors, "You do but beat the vessel, the case, the husk of Anaxarchus: you do not beat me." His body was to him but as a case, a husk: he counted his soul himself, which they could not reach. You are wise if you know how to apply this.

Socrates said of his enemies, “They may kill me, but they cannot hurt me.” So afflictions may kill us, but they cannot hurt us: they may take away our life, but they cannot take away our God, our Christ, our crown.

The afflictions that attend the saints in the ways of holiness are but short and momentary. “Sorrow may abide for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” This short storm will end in an everlasting calm; this short night will end in a glorious day that shall never end. It is but a very short time between grace and glory, between our title to the crown and our wearing the crown, between our right to the heavenly inheritance and our possession of the heavenly inheritance. A thousand years to the Lord are but as one day. What is our life but a shadow, a bubble, a flower, a post, a span, a dream? Be resigned to the will of God, and your sorrows will soon be turned into joy. “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

The afflictions that befall the saints are such as proceed from God’s dearest love. “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” “Saints,”

saith God, "think not that I hate you because I thus chide you: he that escapes reprobation may suspect his adoption." Austin asketh, "Si amatur, quomodo infirmatur?" (If he were beloved, how came he to be sick?). So are wicked men apt to say, because they know not that corrections are pledges of our adoption and badges of our sonship. God had one Son without sin, but none without sorrow. God had one Son without corruption, but none without correction. A gracious soul may look through the darkest cloud, and see a God smiling on him. We must look through the anger of his correction to the sweetness of his countenance; as by the rainbow we see the beautiful image of the sun's light in the midst of a dark and watery cloud.

It is our duty and glory not to measure afflictions by the smart, but by the end. When Israel was dismissed out of Egypt it was with "gold and earrings" (Exod. xi.). So the Jews were dismissed out of Babylon with gifts and jewels and all necessary utensils (Ezra i.). Look more at the latter end of a Christian's life than at the beginning of his affliction. Consider the patience of Job, and what end the Lord made with him. Look not upon Lazarus lying

at Dives' door, but lying in Abraham's bosom. Look not to the beginning of Joseph, who was so far from his dream that the sun and moon should reverence him that for two years he was cast where **he** could see neither sun, moon, nor stars ; but behold him at the last made ruler over Egypt. Look not upon David when there was but a step between him and death, nor when he was envied by some and slighted and despised by others ; but behold him seated on his royal throne, and dying in his bed of honour, and his son Solomon with all his nobles about him.

The design of God in all affliction is only to try us ; it is not to wrong, nor to ruin us, as ignorant souls are apt to think. "He knoweth the way that I take, and when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold," saith patient Job. Herodotus said of the Assyrians, "Lo, they drink nothing but wormwood all their life long : when they die they shall swim in honey." So in Deut. viii. 2 : "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou *wouldest* keep his commandments, or no." God

afflicted them thus that he might make known to themselves and others what was in their hearts.

Tried one, recognise in thy sorest afflictions a Father's rod, hear in them a Father's voice, and remember that he disciplines most those whom he loves most. If you had no trials, you would have reason to fear God had left you to yourself, which is a fearful condition for any one to be in. God sometimes sends afflictions to his people as a token of his favour, when the sun of prosperity is shining full upon them. Some ministers have feared for their members' advancement in the Divine life when riches have increased. Mr. Newton, hearing that a person in whose welfare he was greatly interested had met with peculiar success in business, and was deeply immersed in worldly engagements, the first time he called on him, he took him by the hand, and, drawing him on one side into the counting-house, told him his apprehensions of his spiritual welfare. His friend, without making any reply, called down his partner in life, who came with her eyes suffused with tears, and unable to speak. Inquiring the cause, he was told she had just been sent for to one of her children that was out at nurse, *and supposed to be in dying circum-*

stances. Clasping her hands immediately in his, Mr. Newton cried, "God be thanked : he has not forsaken you ! I do not wish your babe to suffer, but I am happy to find he gives you this token of his favour."

The Rev. Richard Cecil considered afflictions among his flock a token of God's favour. Many years ago he entered the shop of a prosperous London bookseller with whom he was on terms of intimate and Christian friendship. He inquired for his friend, and, when told that he was at home, but particularly engaged, sent a messenger to him to the effect that he wanted an interview with him, if but for a few minutes. This message being delivered, the clergyman was invited to walk up-stairs into the bookseller's sitting-room. He entered the room and found his friend sitting by his child's cot. The child was dying, but, with affection strong in death, it had clasped its father's hand, and was holding it with a convulsive grasp. "You are a father," said the afflicted parent, "or I should not have allowed you to witness such a scene." "Thank God ! thank God !" fervently exclaimed the minister, as he instinctively comprehended at a glance the situation of his friend—"thank God ! he *has not forgotten you.* I have been much

troubled on your account, my dear sir. I have thought much about you lately. I have been much afraid for you. Things have gone on so well with you for so long a time, you have been so prosperous, that I have been almost afraid that God had forgotten you. But I said to myself, ‘Surely God will not forsake such a man as this—will not suffer him to go on in prosperity without some check, some reverse?’ And I see he has not. No! God has not forgotten you.”

Dear reader, be not surprised if you have to suffer much affliction : it is the lot of the people of God. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings, and so must we be. There will be abundant grace imparted to sustain us, and therefore we should be submissive to the Divine will. This earthly suffering is only a token. If Christ had not suffered, I do not see how we could well have trusted in him. If he had come in splendour and lived here in bliss, what would have persuaded us that he really loved and pitied us? Ah! our *Friend!* shall *he* laugh while we sinners weep? shall *he* live while we sinners die? Shall *he* go along a little way with us in our pathway of tears, and stop short as the darkness thickens, and the

glooms of death begin to gather around our sightless eyeballs? Oh! does not our heart look for him, and our soul want him to go the whole way with us, and, as far as any of our own evils must extend, desire to have his own footprints in the path we must tread? He has done it—he has done it! He took the last step when he plunged into the horrors of death. He grappled with our last enemy. He overthrew him in the conflict. And now, as our friends, one after another, die in our arms, they exclaim, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and hasten away, on the wings of angels, to the bosom of God.

This is what we want. We want Christ to traverse the whole field of our sufferings, which had their origin in sin, nor leave a spot unsprinkled with his tears and blood. His humiliation stopped, and his tears began, just where they should have done. He came to redeem sinners from earth, and in this lifetime of God's merciful forbearance. And if it had been so that after this lifetime, or out of this world, sinners were to be redeemed by him, or if any part of their redemption were to be in some purgatory or intermediate state, his humiliation would not have stopped at the tomb. He would

have gone beyond it, and, on the domains of eternity, and in his dark prison-house, would have grappled with the prince of hell! But such was not his mission. His field was earth, his path the path of sinners. His work extended to the very last spot where any human woes need extend; and when death was finishing his work upon him he was finishing his own, and exclaimed, in the majesty of dying innocence, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost.

And while evils are here, and are constantly thronging in upon us, and the last, if not the worst of them is soon to come, do we not need now, and shall we not need in the hour of the last conflict, to know, and know it well, that our Friend has traversed the whole journey, and set up his signals of compassion and mercy all along the road to the mouth of the tomb? He has planted them there. He is risen. His tomb is empty. He has gone to appear in the presence of God for us. The Captain of our salvation is made perfect through sufferings.

As you remember the sufferings which made your Redeemer a perfect Redeemer, aim to feel the full appropriateness of his death. He died for you. For you he trod the wine-press of the *wrath of God!* you, a diminutive creature, a

guilty being, a breath, a worm of the dust, a sinner on the highway to hell! You were exposed to infinite horrors ; but he loved you, and, though he could only save you by fighting his way to your recovery through the flames of wrath that kindled upon him, yet he did not hesitate. With a "soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and with the blood-sweat streaming from his body in the agony of the garden, he drew not back. He met the last item, and satisfied the Father for you.

And if Christ has triumphed over the guilt of the past, so is he prepared to triumph, in you, over the terrors of the future. The future has terrors. I do not attempt to hide them. The time is coming when the dart of death shall be lifted against you. You must grapple with the king of terrors. But Christ died that he might destroy him that had the power of death ; that is, the devil. If you believe, you shall see the salvation of God. Death cannot hurt you ; the grave cannot hold you ; hell cannot claim you. As your breath stops heaven shall open upon your sight ; Jesus Christ shall appear. He will come again and claim his ransomed child ; and, mounting with your immortal spirit to the skies, *you will hear him saying, "Father, I will that*

they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory." Fear not, then, for the future. The Captain of salvation is perfect ; he has traversed the whole field of evil for you, and is prepared to transform the bed of death into a field of victory. He will take you home to his house of "many mansions." In that sweet hope at all times think upon his death.

Afflictions are in God's catalogue of mercies. "Afflictions are God's hired labourers, to break the clods and plough the land." God "sits as a refiner and purifier of silver." Be not troubled if you are privileged to suffer. If God lays his hand upon you, be thankful that he remembers you in any way ; it may be in sickness, bereavement, poverty, or even all these, and, if so, be still. You may, like Jacob, think that all these things are against you, whereas they will turn out to be for your good. Have patience, and your "night of weeping" will be succeeded by the "morning of joy." You may be dejected in spirit ; you may be almost melancholy, almost in despair ; but there is no good reason for your being so when you consider that all the "precious promises" are on your side. Take, oh, take them, and plead them at the throne of grace, and your

"heavenly Father will verify them beyond your expectations in your experience in his own good time."

Patience under the rod, and submission to your heavenly Father's will, will enable you to glorify his grace in your most trying hour. Trust, and do not be afraid: God's "judgments are right." If you hope in God only, "at even time it shall be light." Peace has been made "by the blood of his cross." Some of the best men have suffered in prisons, and, though heavily laden with chains, they have been most resigned to their Father's will.

Guy de Brez, a French minister, was prisoner in the Castle of Tournay, in Belgium. A lady who visited him said she "wondered how he could eat, or drink, or sleep in quiet." "Madam," said he, "my chains do not terrify me or break my sleep; on the contrary, I glory and take delight therein, esteeming them at a higher rate than chains and rings of gold, or jewels of any price whatever. The rattling of my chains is like the effect of an instrument of music in my ears: not that such an effect comes merely from my chains, but it is because I am bound therewith for maintaining the truth of the Gospel."

Be sure whatever God does is for the best:

pray that you may be enabled to say, “Thy kingdom come ; thy will be done ;” and then you will be “presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Make the following sentiments your own :—

BE still, my soul ; Jehovah loveth thee :

Fret not nor murmur at thy weary lot.

Though dark and lone thy journey seems to be,

Be sure that thou art ne’er by him forgot.

He ever loves ; then trust him, trust him still ;

Let all thy care be this—the doing of his will.

Thy hand ‘in his, like fondest, happiest child,

Place thou, nor draw it for a moment thence :

Walk thou with him, a Father reconciled,

Till in his own good time he call thee hence.

Walk with him now ; so shall thy way be bright,

And all thy soul be filled with his most glorious
light.

Fight the good fight of faith, nor turn aside

Through fear of peril from or earth or hell :

Take to thee now the armour proved and tried ;

Take to thee spear and sword : oh, wield
them well.

So shalt thou conquer here, so win the day,

So wear the crown when this hard life has passed
away.

Take courage ! faint not, though the foe be strong :

Christ is thy strength ; he fighteth on thy side ;
Swift be thy race ; remember, 'tis not long ;

The goal is near ; the prize he will provide ;
And then from earthly toil thou restest ever ;
Thy home on the fair banks of life's eternal
river !

He comes with his reward ; 'tis just at hand :

He comes in glory to his promised throne.
My soul, rejoice ; ere long thy feet shall stand

Within the city of the Blessed One,
Thy perils past, thy heritage secure,
Thy tears all wiped away, thy joy for ever sure.

PRECIOUS PROMISES.

"I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried : they shall call on my name, and I will hear them : I will say, It is my people : and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. xiii. 9).

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried" (Dan. xii. 10).

"I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their genera-

tions for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. xvii. 7).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James i. 12).

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10).

GRACE FOR THE TEMPTED.

“ **G**OD is able to make all grace abound toward you ; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Cor. ix. 8). “ As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

All-sufficiency in all things : what a glorious truth for the believer ! What a delightful text just quoted for the tried, the tempted child of God ! It is a three-fold link in a golden chain, let down from the throne of grace by the God of grace. *All grace, all-sufficiency in all things :* what precious promises, made by our heavenly Father ! No children have so much reason to rejoice as God’s children ; none are loved by their father as his are. He loves them with an *everlasting love* ; he loves them unto the end.

The weakest need not fear to come to his throne. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. iv. 16).

Let us pray for "grace to help in time of need." But is not every time a time of need with us? It is. And there is not a moment in our existence in which we can live as we ought, independently of Divine grace. We need this grace to mortify our corruptions, to sanctify our affections, to resist temptations, to overcome the world. It is this, and this alone, that can enable us to pursue our journey, to run our race, to accomplish our warfare, to "endure to the end." We cannot pray, or sing, or hear, or read, as we ought, without the assistance of this grace helping our infirmities. "We cannot," says Bishop Hopkins, "stand one moment longer than God holds us, or walk one step farther than God leads us." The apostle would teach us to pray constantly.

But there are some seasons in which we peculiarly require the aid of Divine grace.

Prosperity is a time of need. Few "know how to abound." It is no easy thing to be full, and not deny God. Worldly fame and affluence have often had a baneful effect on the minds of

good men ; have attached them too strongly to earth, and slackened their diligence in seeking "a better country, even a heavenly." They have had less dependence upon God, and less communion with him. They have grown high-minded and illiberal, and exhibited far less of the Christian in their advancement than in their poverty. Others have lost their religion entirely in passing from a cottage to a mansion. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Let us therefore be wise, and remember that the wisdom which can alone preserve us consists in our fearing always ; in a diffidence of ourselves ; in our praying, " Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." He indeed can keep us from falling, even in slippery places. Thus he guarded Joseph and Daniel in situations equally high and dangerous.

Affliction is a time of need. It matters not from what quarter the trouble springs : it is a trying season ; and the Christian is concerned to "come forth as gold." He not only wants support and comfort, so that he may not "faint ;" but he wants strength and preservation, so that he may not sin. He is concerned to be secured from impatience, from distrust of Providence, *from quarrelling with instruments.* He wishes

to glorify God in the fires, and to derive advantages from his crosses, so as to be able to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." For all this he seeks the Lord ; and what the Lord said to Paul he may apply unto himself : " My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Every real Christian is the subject of gracious influence, by which he has been quickened to spiritual life, "translated from darkness to light," and is "a new creature in Christ Jesus." Such only know their need of grace, and none else truly desire grace. If grace be sincerely desired, it is a gracious desire ; and a gracious desire is the legitimate effect of a principle of grace implanted in the heart by the energy of the Spirit of God. Christians need grace to pray spiritually ; they need grace to watch constantly ; they need grace to suffer patiently ; and they will need grace to die triumphantly.

Prayer is one of the most important exercises in which we can engage : it is necessary on all occasions. It should *precede* all our pursuits ; it should *attend* them ; it should *succeed* them. If God be our *Father* in Christ, and condescends to encourage us to approach his footstool and solicit *his blessing*, yet we should remember

he is Jehovah, and “will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people will he be glorified.” Filial confidence must never destroy holy reverence in our approach to a throne of grace. “And Abraham said, Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.” Dear reader, you and I require grace to preserve us when tempted to sin ; grace to restrain us from sinning ; grace to inspire our prayers, and to make them acceptable to our heavenly Father. Praying grace is essential to real prayer. The Christian can no more pray in a spiritual manner without “the spirit of grace and of supplications” than a vessel can sail without water, or than a man can breathe without life. The renewed soul delights in prayer. Fellowship and communion with our Father in heaven is one of the best means by which we may overcome our evil natures and the temptations of the world. The most eminent saints have been men of much prayer.

It is a fact deserving the attention of all, that many of the most eminent men of the world have left behind them the most decisive testimony to the importance and value of true *religion*. Sir John Mason, who had been Privy

Councillor to four successive monarchs, and who was connected with the most important transactions of the State for thirty years, in the evening of his life declared, "Were I to live again, I would exchange the court for retirement, and the whole life I have lived in the palace for one hour's enjoyment of God in my closet. All things now forsake me, except my God, my duty, and my prayers."

It is said further of this eminent man, that at the close of life he observed that the result of his observation and experience might be comprised in three short sentences : " Seriousness is the greatest wisdom ; temperance the best physic ; and a good conscience the best estate."

If we are truly pious, we shall have all our faculties and passions engaged in prayer.

That grace may thrive and grow in our hearts, and that we may abound in all the fruits of the Spirit, it must have full possession of our hearts, it must grow singly there, with no "root of bitterness" growing up with it. Hence in part the Church is called "a garden enclosed ;" where nothing is permitted to grow but what is planted there for real use, profit, and delight. The seed of God's word will not grow together with cares, pleasures, and riches ; but only in a

single heart, which is entirely appropriated to it only. It is not the passing of these things through the mind that prevents the growth and perfection of grace, but their taking root there and growing as in their own proper soil, peculiarly suited to them. Cares and riches often fall in the way of a Christian ; and he is sometimes obliged to handle these "thorns" to his great uneasiness. But they must be carefully kept out of the heart, that no such bitter roots may grow there. The thorns and briers exhaust the soil and prevent the influences of the sun. Though the good seed may have taken root and grow, yet it will bring forth no fruit unto perfection ; there will be only appearances of fruit in the ear, but no real grain. If the cares, or the riches, or the pleasures of the world, no matter which, whether singly or together, are rooted in the heart together with the word, the fruits of the Spirit cannot thrive. Can love, joy, peace, grow with the riches, pleasures, and cares of this world ? No ; they are as different and as opposite to each other as light and darkness. Who has ever yet seen meekness, patience, longsuffering, goodness, gentleness, temperance, &c., growing and thriving *with such thorns and briers* ?

The only soil which produces fruit is “the good and honest heart,” the enclosed garden, well cultivated and manured by the heavenly Husbandman. It is not like the way-side, where the seed is trodden and devoured by birds ; but where it is kept. Nor like the stony ground, hard and shallow ; but the word is understood and received ; it enters deep into the heart : it cannot be plucked up by Satan, nor scorched by the heat, which, instead of causing it to wither, makes it grow the faster. Nor is it like the thorny ground, where no fruit grows to perfection. The fruits of the Spirit only prove the heart to be good and honest. Where there is no love, joy, and peace, there is no good soil. Where these fruits grow, they grow singly ; nothing else can spring up with them. Oh for a single heart and a single eye ! Without this we are unstable in all our ways, uncomfortable, and unfruitful ; making, it may be, a fine appearance, but bringing no fruit unto perfection.

Christians need grace to watch constantly. The word of command which Jesus Christ, the Captain of salvation, gives his soldiers is—“Watch.” “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” Watchfulness is the sentinel which should stand at each avenue to the soul : we

must be always watching, from morn till eve, from the desert to the land of Canaan ; we must watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. How many in an unguarded moment have fallen into sin, and had to grieve in consequence to the end of life ! There is never a moment that we are safe if we are not watching. Satan is sure to take the advantage of carelessness. Dear reader, are you watching, are you praying without ceasing ? If so, you need not fear what all the enemies of the cross can say or do. If God be for you, who can be against you ? Pray earnestly for living grace, and dying grace for your dying hour : a true Christian will make known his feelings thus at the throne of grace :—

O thou ever-blessed Fountain of natural and spiritual life ! I thank thee that I live, and know the exercises and pleasures of a religious life. I bless thee that thou hast infused into me thine own vital breath, though I was once “dead in trespasses and sins ;” so that I am become, in a sense peculiar to thine own children, a living soul. But it is my earnest desire that I may not only live, but grow—“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” I humbly entreat thee that thou wilt

form my mind to right notions in religion, that I may not judge of grace by any wrong conceptions of it, nor measure my advances in it by those things which are merely the effects of nature, and perhaps its corrupt effects.

May I be seeking after an increase of Divine love to thee, my God and Father in Christ, of unreserved resignation to thy wise and holy will, and of extensive benevolence to my fellow-creatures. May I grow in patience and fortitude of soul, in humility and zeal, in spirituality and a heavenly disposition of mind, and in a concern “that, whether present or absent, I may be accepted of the Lord ;” that, whether I live or die, it may be for his glory. In a word, as thou knowest I hunger and thirst after righteousness, make me whatever thou wouldest delight to see me. Draw on my soul, by the gentle influences of thy gracious Spirit, every trace and every feature which thine eye, O heavenly Father, may survey with pleasure, and which thou mayest acknowledge as thine own image.

I know, O Lord, I have not as yet attained—yea, my soul is utterly confounded to think how far I am from being already perfect ; but this is one thing (after the great example of thine apostle, and the much greater of his Lord)

I would endeavour to do : “forgetting the things which are behind, I would press forward to those which are before.” Oh that thou wouldest feed my soul by thy word and Spirit ! Having been, as I humbly hope and trust, regenerated by it, “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by thy word, which liveth and abideth for ever,” as a “new-born babe I desire the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby.” And may my profiting appear unto all men, till at length “I come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;” and, after having enjoyed the pleasures of thy courts below, be fixed in the paradise above ! I ask and hope it through Him of whose “fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” To him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

Dear reader, it is no wonder that you and I should be tempted, since angels have been tempted, and even our blessed Lord. If these so really, so gloriously, so eminently beloved of God, if these that have lived in heaven have been tempted, let no saints judge themselves not to be beloved because they are tempted. It is as natural for saints to be

tempted as it is for the sun to shine or a bird to sing. The eagle complains not of her wings, nor the peacock of his train, nor the nightingale of her voice, because they are natural to them ; no more should saints of their temptations, because they are natural to them. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. vi. 12).

Consider that all the temptations that befall the saints shall be sanctified to them by a hand of love. Ah, the choice experiences that the saints get of the power of God supporting them, of the wisdom of God directing them (so to handle their spiritual weapons, their graces, as not only to resist, but to overcome), of the mercy and goodness of the Lord pardoning and succouring them ; and therefore saith Paul, I received “the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor. xii. 7). Twice does Paul use this last expression in the verse quoted : he begins with it, and ends with it. If he had not been buffeted, who knows how his heart would have swelled : he might have been carried higher in conceit than before he was in his ecstasy. Temptation is God’s

school, wherein he gives his people the clearest and sweetest discoveries of his love ; a school wherein God teaches his people to be more frequent and fervent in duty (when Paul was buffeted, then he prayed thrice ; *i.e.*, frequently and fervently) ; a school wherein God teaches his people to be more tender, meek, and compassionate to other poor tempted souls than ever ; a school wherein God teaches his people to see a greater evil in sin than ever, and a greater emptiness in the creature than ever, and a greater need of Christ and free grace than ever ; a school wherein God will teach his people that all temptations are but his goldsmiths, by whom he will try and refine, and make his people more bright and glorious. The issue of all temptations shall be the good of the saints, as you may see by the temptations that Adam and Eve, and Christ, and David, and Job, and Peter, and Paul met with. Those hands of power and love, that bring light out of darkness, good out of evil, sweet out of bitter, life out of death, heaven out of hell, will bring much sweet and good to his people out of all the temptations that come upon them.

No temptations do hurt or harm the saints so long as they are resisted by them. It

is not Satan's tempting, but your assenting, not his enticing, but your yielding, that makes temptations hurtful to your souls. If the soul, when it is tempted, resists the temptation and saith with Christ, "Get thee behind me, Satan," and with that young convert, "Ego non sum ego" (I am not the man that I was); or (as Luther counsels all men to answer all temptations) with these words, "Christianus sum" (I am a Christian)—if a man's temptations be his greatest affliction, then is the temptation no sin upon his soul, though it be a trouble upon his mind. When a soul can look the Lord in the face, and say, "Ah, Lord! I have many outward troubles upon me, I have lost such and such a dear mercy, and such and such desirable mercies; and thou who knowest the heart, knowest that all my crosses and losses do not make so many wounds in my soul, nor fetch so many sighs from my heart, nor tears from my eyes, as do those temptations with which Satan harasses my soul." When it is thus with the soul, then temptations are only the soul's trouble; they are not the soul's sin.

Satan is a malicious and envious enemy. As his names are, so is he. His names are all names of enmity: the Accuser, the Tempter, the De-

stroyer, the Devourer, the Envious Man ; and this malice and envy of his he shows sometimes by tempting men to such sins as are quite contrary to their temperament, just as he led Vespasian and Julian, men of sweet and excellent natures, to be most bloody murderers. And sometimes he shows his malice by tempting men to such things as shall bring them neither honour nor profit, and sometimes even to acts which they abhor in others. Now, if the soul resists these, and complains of these, groans and mourns under these, and looks up to the Lord Jesus to be delivered from these, then shall they not be put down to the soul's account, but to Satan's, who will be the more tormented as the saints have been by him the more maliciously tempted.

Present and peremptory resistance through Christ must be made against Satan's temptations. Katharine Bretterge once, after a great conflict with Satan, said, "Reason not with me : I am but a weak woman. If thou hast anything to say, say it to my Christ : he is my Advocate, my strength, and my Redeemer ; and he shall plead for me."

Men must not seek to resist Satan's craft with craft (*sed per apertum martem*), but by

open defiance. He shoots with Satan in his own bow who thinks by disputing and reasoning to put him off. As soon as a temptation shows its face, say to the temptation, as Ephraim to his idols, "Get you hence: what have I any more to do with you?" (Hos. xiv.). Oh, say to the temptation, as David said to the sons of Zeruiah, "What have I to do with you? You will 'be too hard for me.'" He that doth thus resist temptations shall never be undone by temptation.

Make strong and constant resistance against Satan's temptations by arguments drawn from the honour of God, the love of God, your union and communion with God; and from the blood of Christ, the death of Christ, the kindness of Christ, the intercession of Christ, and the glory of Christ; and from the voice of the Spirit, the counsel of the Spirit, the comforts of the Spirit, the presence of the Spirit, the seal of the Spirit, the whisperings of the Spirit, the commands of the Spirit, the assistance of the Spirit, the witness of the Spirit; and from the glory of heaven, the excellency of grace, the beauty of holiness, the worth of the soul, and the vileness, and bitterness, and evil of sin, the least sin being a greater evil than the greatest temptation in the world.

And see that you make constant resistance, as well as strong resistance. Be constant in arms. Satan will come with new temptations when old ones are too weak. In a calm, prepare for a storm. The tempter is restless, impudent, and subtle ; he will suit his temptations to your constitution and inclination. Satan loves to sail with the wind. If your knowledge be weak, he will tempt you to error. If your conscience be tender, he will tempt you to scrupulosity and too much precision : if your conscience be wide and large, he will tempt you to carnal security. If you are bold-spirited, he will tempt you to presumption ; if timorous, to desperation ; if flexible, to inconstancy ; if proud and stiff, to gross folly. Therefore still expect fresh assaults ; make one victory a step to another. When you have overcome a temptation take heed of unbending your bow, and look well to it that your bow be always bent, and that it remain in strength. When you have overcome one temptation you must be ready to enter the lists with another. As distrust, in some sense, is the mother of safety, so security is the gate of danger. A man had need to fear most that which he fears not at all. If Satan be always roaring, we should be always watching and

resisting him. But he that makes strong and constant resistance to Satan's temptations shall in the end get above his temptations, and for the present is secure enough from being ruined by them.

Remember it is dangerous to yield to the least sin in order to be rid of the greatest temptation. To take this course were as if a man should think to wash himself clean in ink, or as if a man should exchange a light cross, made of paper, for an iron cross which is heavy, toilsome, and bloody. The least sin resting upon the conscience will more wound, vex, and oppress the soul than all the temptations of the world can; therefore never yield to the least sin to be rid of the greatest temptation.

The believer's duty is to pray; and in answer to the prayer of faith God will deliver him from temptation, or grant him abundance of grace to withstand in the hour of trial. Do not allow your faith to be shaken when the conflict is most severe. "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" (Psa. xxxiv. 17). "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psa. cxlv. 19).

In the beginning of 1814, troops of Cossacks, Germans, and Russians were half an hour's march of the town of Schand new and fearful reports of the behaviour of the soldiers were brought from the camp every day. There had been a truce, which was to come to an end at midnight of the 1st January, which was now drawing near.

On the outskirts of the town, on the side where the enemy lay, there was a house standing alone; and in it there was an old woman, who was earnestly praying, in the words of an ancient hymn, that God would raise up a wall around them, so that the enemy might fear to attack them.

In the same house dwelt her daughter, a widow, and her grandson, a youth of fifteen years. He heard the prayer of his grandmother, and could not refrain from saying, "How can such a thing be? I do not understand how she could pray for such a thing as that a wall should be built around them which could keep the enemy out."

she added, "do you think that if it were the will of God to build a wall around us, it would be impossible to him?"

And now came the dreaded night of the 5th of January; and about midnight the troops began to enter on all sides. The house spoken of lay close by the road, and was somewhat larger than the dwellings near it, which were only very small cottages. Its inhabitants looked out with anxious fear, as parties of the soldiers appeared one after another, and even went to the neighbouring houses to ask for what they wanted; but all rode past their dwelling. Throughout the whole day there had been a heavy fall of snow, the first that winter; and towards evening the storm became violent to a degree seldom known. At length came four parties of Cossacks, who had been hindered by the snow from entering the town by another road. This part of the outskirts was at some distance from the town itself, and therefore they would not go farther; so that all the houses around that in which the old woman lived were filled with these soldiers, who quartered themselves in them. In several houses there were fifty or sixty of these half-savage men. It was a terrible night for those who dwelt in this

part of the town, filled to overflowing with the troops of the enemy.

But not a single soldier came into the grandmother's house ; and, amidst the loud noises and wild sounds all around, not even a knock at the door was heard, to the great wonder of the family within. The next morning, as it grew light, they saw the cause. The storm had drifted a mass of snow to such a height, between the road-side and the house, that to approach it was impossible. "Do you not now see, my son," said the old grandmother, "that it was possible for God to raise a wall around us ?"

Does not this story remind us of the words, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"? Does it not seem as if the snow had been gathered together as by angels' hands to form a defence for that house where one dwelt who thus feared God and trusted in him ?

Prayer, temptation, and meditation, Luther used to say, made a minister. Every one should strive to benefit by the afflictive dispensations of God's providence. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We have no cause for fear or unbelief. We have

the cross now, the crown to-morrow ; now the bed of languishing, to-morrow the throne of Jesus. What encouragement to "fight the good fight of faith." The body now bears the spirit down : wait till the dawn of day, and the spirit will bear the body up. A few breathings more in this dull and oppressive element ; then all will be health and buoyancy, strength and gladness, purity and peace ; the body changed, the heart all holy. Even now the Lord is with you, but you cannot see him for the darkness of night. You walk by faith, not by sight. Yet you can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." He lives ; he thinks upon you ; he is with you ; he will never leave you, nor forsake you. He is a Friend, a Brother, a Lord : a Friend to guide you by his counsel ; a Brother to sympathize with you in all your sorrows ; a Lord to defend you from all evil, and make all things work together for your good.

The means God uses to make us holy are trouble and affliction, and these drive us to a throne of grace.

When Melancthon was entreated by his friends to lay aside the natural anxiety and timidity of his temper, he replied, "If I had no anxieties, I should lose a powerful incentive to

prayer ; but when the cares of life impel to devotion, the best means of consolation, a religious mind cannot do without them. Thus trouble compels me to prayer, and prayer drives away trouble."

Christians need grace to suffer patiently : they are often "troubled on every side ;" they not only share in the common trials of life with mankind in general, but they have trials peculiar to themselves ; and they often find it no easy thing to conduct themselves under their manifold temptations agreeably with the spirit of the religion they profess. Under the various ills of life, how frequently do we rebel ! The best men, when left to the pride and depravity of their hearts, soon betray lamentable proofs of their impatience and fretfulness. Even Job, when greatly exercised, said, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let the day be darkness ; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it." "Let them curse it that curse the day." "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. I loathe it ; I would not live alway." And Jonah, under the loss of his gourd, said, "Take, I beseech thee, my life

from me ; for it is better for me to die than to live." Man is an irritable, discontented creature. The best men have need to pray for much grace, for they are dependent upon grace to do and suffer all the will of God.

We are dependent upon God for assisting grace, as we are for renewing grace. We must look to him, and to him alone ; for he is the God of all grace. We may come and receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace. We should examine ourselves often by God's holy word. Do you, dear reader ? Can you in patience possess your soul ? Can you maintain a steady calmness and serenity when God is striking at your dearest enjoyments in this world, and acting most directly contrary to your present interests, to your natural passions and desires ? If you can, it is a most certain and noble sign that grace is in a very vigorous state.

Examine also what affections you find in your heart towards those who are about you, and towards the rest of mankind in general. Do you find your heart overflow with undissembled and unrestrained benevolence ? Are you more sensible than you once were of those many endearing bonds which unite all men, and especially all Christians, into one commu-

nity—which make them brethren and fellow-citizens? Do all the unfriendly passions die and wither in your soul, while the kind social affections grow and strengthen? And, though self-love has never been the reigning passion since you became a true Christian, yet, as some remainders of it are still too ready to work inwardly, and to show themselves, especially as sudden occasions arise, do you perceive that you get ground of them? Do you think of yourself only as one of a great number, whose particular interests and concerns are of little importance when compared with those of the community, and ought by all means, on all occasions, to be sacrificed to them?

Reflect especially on the temper of your mind towards those whom an unsanctified heart might be ready to imagine it had some just excuse for excepting from the list of those it loves, and concerning whom you are ready to feel a secret aversion, or at least an alienation. How is your mind affected towards those who differ from you in their religious sentiments and practices? I do not say that Christian charity will require you to think every error harmless. It argues no want of love to a friend, in some cases, to fear lest his disorder

should prove more fatal than he seems to imagine ; nay, sometimes the very tenderness of friendship may increase that apprehension. But to hate persons because we think they are mistaken, and to aggravate every difference in judgment or practice into a fatal and damnable error that destroys all Christian communion and love, is a symptom generally much worse than the evil it condemns. Do you love the image of Christ in a person who thinks himself obliged in conscience to profess and worship in a manner different from yourself ? Nay, farther, can you love and honour that which is truly amiable and excellent in those in whom much is defective ; in those in whom there is a mixture of bigotry and narrowness of spirit, which may lead them perhaps to slight, or even to censure you ? Can you love them, as the disciples and servants of Christ, who, through a mistaken zeal, may be ready to cast out your name as evil, and to warn others against you as a dangerous person ? This is none of the least triumphs of charity, nor any despicable evidence of an advance in religion.

And, on this head, reflect farther, how can you bear injuries ? There is a certain hardness of soul in this respect which argues a confirmed

state in piety and virtue. Does everything of this kind hurry and ruffle you, so as to put you to contrivances how you may recompense, or at least how you may disgrace and expose, him who has done you the wrong? Or can you stand the shock calmly, and easily divert your mind to other objects, only, when you recollect these things, pitying and praying for those who, with the worst tempers and views, are assaulting you? This is a Christ-like temper indeed, and he will own it as such—will own you as one of his soldiers, as one of his heroes; especially if it enables you, instead of being overcome of evil, to overcome evil with good. Watch over your spirit and over your tongue when injuries are offered; and see whether you be ready to meditate upon them, to aggravate them to yourself, to complain of them to others, and to lay on all the load of blame that you in justice can; or whether you be ready to put the kindest construction upon the offence, to excuse it as far as reason will allow, and (where, after all, it will wear a black and odious aspect) to forgive it, heartily to forgive it, and that even before any submission is made, or pardon asked; and, in token of the sincerity of that forgiveness, to be contriving what can be done, by some

benefit or other towards the injurious person, to teach him a better temper.

Examine further, with regard to the other evils and calamities of life, and even with regard to its uncertainties, how you can bear them. Do you find your soul is, in this respect, gathering strength? Have you fewer foreboding fears and disquieting alarms than you once had as to what may happen in life? Can you trust the wisdom and goodness of God to order your affairs for you with more complacency and cheerfulness than formerly? Do you find you are able to unite your thoughts more in surveying present circumstances, that you may collect immediate duty from them, though you know not what God will next appoint or call you to? And when you feel the smart of affliction, do you make a less matter of it? Can you transfer your heart more easily to heavenly and Divine objects, without an anxious solicitude whether this or that burden be removed, so it may but be sanctified to promote your communion with God and your ripeness for glory?

Examine, also, whether you advance in humility. This is a silent, but most excellent grace; and they who are most eminent in it are dearest to God, and most fit for the communi-

cations of his presence to them. Do you then feel your mind more emptied of proud and haughty imaginations—not prone so much to look back upon past services which it has performed as forward to those which are yet before you, and inward upon the remaining imperfections of your heart? Do you feel in your breast a deeper apprehension of the infinite majesty of the blessed God, and of the glory of his natural and moral perfections; so as, in consequence of these views, to perceive yourself, as it were, annihilated in his presence, and shrink into “less than nothing, and vanity”? If this be your temper, God will look upon you with peculiar favour, and will visit you more and more with the distinguishing blessings of his grace.

But there is another great branch and effect of Christian humility, which it would be an unpardonable negligence to omit. Let me therefore further inquire, Are you more frequently renewing your application, your sincere, steady, determinate application to the righteousness and blood of Christ, as being sensible how unworthy you are to appear before God otherwise than in him? and do the remaining corruptions of your heart humble you before him, though the disorders of your life are, in a great measure,

cured? Are you more earnest to obtain the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit; and have you such a sense of your own weakness as to depend, in all the duties you perform, upon the communications of his grace to help your infirmities? Can you, at the close of your most religious, exemplary, and useful days, blush before God for the deficiencies of them, while others perhaps may be ready to admire and extol your conduct? And while you give the glory of all that has been right to Him from whom the strength and grace has been derived, are you coming to the blood of sprinkling to free you from the guilt which mingles itself even with the best of your services? Do you learn to receive the bounties of Providence not only with thankfulness as coming from God, but with a mixture of shame and confusion too, under a consciousness that you do not deserve them, and are continually forfeiting them? And do you justify Providence in your afflictions and disappointments, even while many are flourishing around you in the full bloom of prosperity whose offences have been more visible, at least, and more notorious than yours?

Do you also advance in zeal and activity for the service of God and the happiness of man-

kind? Does your love show itself sincere, by a continual flow of good works? Do you feel in your breast that you are more frequently devising liberal things, and ready to waive your own advantage or pleasure that you may accomplish them? Do you find your imagination teeming, as it were, with conceptions and schemes for the advancement of the cause and interest of Christ in the world, for the propagation of his Gospel, and for the happiness of your fellow-creatures? and do you not only pray, but act for it, act in such a manner as to show that you pray in earnest, and feel a readiness to do what little you can in this cause, even though others, who might, if they pleased, very conveniently do a vast deal more, will do nothing?

Reflect how your affections stand with regard to this world and another. Are you more deeply and practically convinced of the vanity of these "things which are seen, and are temporal"? Do you perceive your expectations from them, and your attachments to them, to diminish? You are willing to stay in this world as long as your Father pleases; and it is right and well; but do you find your bonds so loosened to it that you are willing, heartily willing, to leave it at the shortest warning; so

that if God should see fit to summon you away on a sudden, though it should be in the midst of your enjoyments, pursuits, expectations, and hopes, you would cordially consent to that remove, without saying, "Lord, let me stay a little longer, to enjoy this or that agreeable entertainment, to finish this or that scheme"? Can you think with an habitual calmness and hearty approbation, if such be the Divine pleasure, of waking no more when you lie down on your bed, of returning home no more when you go out of your house? And yet, on the other hand, how great soever the burdens of life are, do you find a willingness to bear them, in submission to the will of your heavenly Father, though it should be to many future years, and though they should be years of far greater affliction than you have ever yet seen? Can you say calmly and steadily, if not with such overflowings of tender affections as you could desire, "Behold, thy servant, thy child, is in thine hand: do with me as seemeth good in thy sight! My will resolves itself into thine, to be lifted up or laid down, to be carried out or brought in, to be here or there, in this or that circumstance, just as thou pleasest, and as shall best suit thy purpose, do with me as thou wilt."

In answer to believing prayer the saints have been able to overcome temptations of all kinds. There are many duties the Christian must attend to. Secret prayer is especially a duty : this is to all the others as the keel is to the ship; it bears up all the rest. If we look into the practice of Scripture saints, we shall find them all to have been great dealers with God in this secret prayer. Abraham had his grove whither he retired *to call* "on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God" (Gen. xxi. 33). We meet Isaac walking out into the fields to seek some secret place where he might more freely, with deep meditation, compose himself for this work (Gen. xxiv. 63). Jacob is famous for his wrestling, as it were, hand to hand with God in the night. David's life was little else; he gave himself to prayer (Psa. cix. 4). We have Elias at prayer under the juniper-tree, Peter on the leads, Cornelius in a corner of his house. Yea, our blessed Saviour, whose soul could have fasted longest without being impaired through the want of this repast, was most frequent in the performance of it. Early in the morning he is praying alone (Mark i. 35), and late in the evening (Matt. xiv. 23); and this was his usual practice, as may be gathered from Luke xxii. 39, compared with

Luke xxi. 37. Thus Christ sanctified this duty by his own example. Yea, we have a sweet promise to the due performance of it ; and God does not promise a reward for that work which he commanded us not to do : “ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly ” (Matt. vi. 6). Our Saviour takes it for granted that every child of God will be often praying to his heavenly Father ; and therefore he rather encourages them in the work he seeth them about than commands them to do it. *When you pray* ; as if he had said, “ I know you cannot live without praying. Now when you would give God a visit, *enter into thy closet* ,” &c. We may doubt, and fear that God will not hear our prayers because of their imperfections ; but this is a delusion : it is a temptation of the devil, and if we yield to it we shall smart for it. We shall do well to consider that “ the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry ” (Psa. xxxiv. 15). “ This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles ” (Psa. xxxiv. 6). “ Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me ” (Psa. l.).

15). "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22).

Believers need grace to die comfortably and triumphantly. Death is a subject which demands our most serious attention : it is the last step out of time into eternity; it is to step into endless happiness or endless misery. Death is a law which none of the living can violate. There is no discharge in this war. Neither the power of the prince, the piety of the prophet, nor the poverty of the pauper is any security against the stroke of death. It is a serious thing to burst the bonds of life, and launch into eternity. O eternity, eternity, eternity, who can tell what thou art—eternity of sorrow, eternity of bliss? Oh for wisdom and grace to prepare for everlasting happiness, and to shun everything which would be the means of consigning me to eternal misery!

Dear reader, consider the subject of death, and then you will be more and more anxious to be prepared for the great change. Some have a slavish fear about meeting the last enemy: Satan takes advantage of this weakness, and harasses the poor soul very much. Some of the best men have dreaded death most, and some circumstances in their experience have

made it very distressing to them ; so that they have cried out with David, " O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." When Hezekiah was admonished to set his house in order, because he must die, and not live, he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord ; and he wept sore. There is something very solemn in death which we cannot well define. Many dread it, but the true Christian has no reason to do so, since Christ has destroyed the power of death over all his believing children ? Rather should it be welcomed as the messenger bidding us leave this world of care, of sorrow, and of sin, to enter that world where all is joy and peace. Let our soliloquy be thus :—

" Why should I shrink at pain or woe,
Or fear at death's dismay ?
I've Canaan's goodly land in view,
And realms of endless day."

Be of good courage, trembling one : remember your Father knows your weakness, and he will strengthen you ; he will give you grace to fight, and grace to conquer too. The hour of death may be a trying one, but God can make it a glorious one also. Have faith in God, and pray for abundant grace, and then you will sing—

" Then while ye hear my heart-strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll ;
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
And glory in my soul."

The eldest son and heir of the Duke of Hamilton was seized with consumptive disease which ended in his death. A little before his decease he lay ill at the family seat near Glasgow. Two ministers came to see him, one of whom, at his request, prayed with him. After the minister had prayed, the dying youth put his hand back, took his Bible from under his pillow, and opened it at the passage, " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." " This, sirs," said he, " is all my comfort." As he was lying one day on the sofa, his tutor was conversing with him on some astronomical subject, and about the nature of the fixed stars. " Ah !" said he, " in a little while I shall know more of this than all of you together." When his death approached he called his brother to his bed-side, and, addressing him with the greatest affection and seriousness, he

closed with these remarkable words : " And now, Douglas, in a little time you will be a duke, but I shall be a king."

" Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God " (Isa. l. 10).

" Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness " (Psa. cxii. 4).

FEAR not the foe, thou flock of God ;
Fear not the sword, the spear, the rod :
 Fear not the foe !

He fights in vain who fights with thee ;
Soon shalt thou see his armies flee,
 Himself laid low.

Come, cheer thee to the toil and fight :
'Tis God, thy God, defends the right ;

 He leads thee on.

His sword shall scatter every foe ;
His shield shall ward off every blow :

 The crown is won.

His is the battle, his the power ;
His is the triumph in that hour :

 In him be strong.

So round thy brow the wreath shall twine,
 So shall the victory be thine,
 And thine the song.

Not long the sigh, the toil, the sweat,
 Not long the fight-day's wasting heat :
 The shadows come.

Slack not thy weapon in the fight ;
 Courage ! for God defends the right :
 Strike home ! strike home !

PRECIOUS PROMISES.

“There shall no evil happen to the just”
 (Prov. xii. 21).

“There shall no evil befall thee” (Psa. xcii. 10).

“He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in
 seven there shall no evil touch thee” (Job. v. 19).

“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast
 down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his
 hand” (Psa. xxxvii. 24).

“The salvation of the righteous is of the
 Lord: he is their strength in the time of
 trouble” (Psa. xxxvii. 39).

“In righteousness shalt thou be established:
 thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou
 shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not
 come near thee” (Isa. liv. 14).

A CROWN FOR THE CONQUEROR.

“HENCEFORTH there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. iv. 8). What a glorious truth is this for the weary pilgrim: a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory, as the reward for endurance to the end ! What infinite love has the blessed Saviour displayed in securing a crown for all who “contend for the faith once delivered to the saints” ! Faint and trembling believer, hold on your way: the contest may be sharp, but it will not be long ; it will soon be over, and then will come a glorious and gracious reward which will more than compensate you for all that *you have* endured for the cause of your

Divine Redeemer. Look beyond the present struggle, beyond and above the present world, to the heavenly rest. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10). A faithful man finds the Lord's favour better than life; for "in his favour is life" (Psa. xxx. 5). "Thy lovingkindness is better than life" (Psa. lxiii. 3). Put God's favour with death itself in the one hand, and God's wrath with life in the other—the faithful man will soon know which to choose, and will say, "Lord, there is no choice, there is no comparison." Ye that close with Christ may see what you are, through grace, to resolve upon: even to be "faithful unto death;" and to lay down all—yea, and life itself—for his service. And death itself should be resolved upon rather than be unfaithful; then how patiently should you bear anything that he sends less than death! Thus the apostle says, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood" (Heb. xii. 4): you might have had greater burdens, therefore bear the less more patiently. Many are peevish and fretful under public and necessary burdens; but what if Christ came and sought your life? Would you then be "faithful unto death"? If he should seek all your worldly accommodation, your

houses, lands, and possessions, would you then suffer joyfully the spoiling of your goods ? So much for a hint about being faithful unto death.

The “crown of life :” what are we to understand by this ? We find eternal life and happiness is elsewhere called a “crown of life :” “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him ” (James i. 12). It is called a “crown,” as it is a gracious reward of the faithful man, in allusion to the custom of the times, when a crown was given to wrestlers and runners as a badge and garland of honour. Here we may notice some things imported in the words, and then some reasons why it is called a crown.

There are these two things may be observed as imported in the words :—

1st. That they that would be faithful ought to look to eternity and a crown of glory. No doubt the faithful have encouragement even here by the way ; but the grand encouragements are coming ; for “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,” says the apostle (1 Cor. xv. 19). Moses had an eye to the “recompense of the reward,” and Paul looked to the “prize of the high calling

of God in Christ," and all believers have "Christ in them the hope of glory." Some believers take it ill that they have not so much comfort here as they would wish, when yet the hope of glory is set before them and not made use of.

2nd. That eternal life sufficiently makes up for all the difficulties the faithful can meet with here in the Lord's way: all their sufferings and hardships are well made up for by a crown. Whatever losses they sustain, when they land in heaven, they will be no losers; it will be no grief of heart to them then to remember that they "came through great tribulation," and that they were helped to be "faithful unto death." While they "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," they have reason to "glory in tribulations" (Rom. v. 2, 3). But consider, why is it called a "crown of life"? To this I reply, It is called a "crown of life" inasmuch as it intimates the encouragement given to them, that, though called to lay down their life, they are far from being losers, since they but exchange a life of sorrow for a life of joy, and rivers of tears for rivers of pleasure for evermore. Perhaps some saints will scarcely get a sight of heaven while in this world, but rather *of hell, and of enemies, and devils, and corrupt*

tions ; and, looking much upon sin, they will hardly know till they get within the gates of the New Jerusalem.

It is called a crown because it is an honour put upon the faithful man. The wrestlers and runners of old had badges of honour put upon their heads ; so the faithful will be “crowned with glory and honour.” Faith, however weak, will be “found unto praise and honour and glory” (1 Pet. i. 7). Here they sit many times with the dogs, as it were, content with the crumbs ; but then they will be set upon the throne with Christ (Rev. iii. 21).

It is a crown in respect of the plenteous good that is to be enjoyed in heaven. “Thou crownest the year with thy goodness ;” that is, thou makest it abound with fruitfulness : and this is most agreeable to the heavenly blessings ; for “there is fulness of joy” there (Psa. xvi. 11). “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Plenty without want, and rest without weariness, are there : the joy does not merely enter into them as here ; but they “enter into the joy of their Lord,” and have communion with God in his joy.

It is a “crown of life” in respect of safety ; for it guards the man from all trouble. “With favour wilt thou compass him [Heb., crown

him] as with a shield" (Psa. v. 12). God's favour, even in this life, guards the saints from danger, so that the "blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall;" but when he gets this crown of life upon his head there shall not be any enemies left to annoy him ; his head will be crowned, and lifted above all his enemies.

In a word, it is called a "crown of life" for its preciousness and dignity, splendour and glory, duration and permanence. It is a kingdom, a palace, a throne, a sceptre, and an inheritance, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away" like the earthly crown of mortal kings, princes, and potentates.

The last thing is the manner of the conveyance of it : "I will *give* thee a crown of life." And here four things may be considered :—

The person conveying or conferring this blessedness, in the pronoun *I*: "I will give." Christ, who is the Purchaser, is also the Dispenser and Giver of the crown. This power he has as Mediator : "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John xvii. 2).

The person to whom the conveyance is made: "I will give *thee*." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give *thee*," namely, the faithful person.

And here you are to observe the difference between the promises of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works the promise was not made to the worker, but to the works, and to the worker because of his works; for works was the condition: but in the covenant of grace the promise is not made to the works, but to the worker, and that not for his works, but because he is in Christ, and his works are the evidence thereof; for example, in that promise, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. viii. 13). Here the promise is not made to the work of mortification, but to the mortified person; and that not because of his mortification, but because he is in Christ; and his mortification, through the Spirit, is an evidence thereof. Thus here the promise of the crown of life is not made to the work of faithfulness, but to the faithful person; and that not because of his faithfulness, but because he is faithful in Christ, or because he is united to Christ; and his faithfulness is an evidence of his union to Christ, to whom all the promises are primarily made, and in whom they are all Yea and Amen. Christ's work, his righteousness, being the only condition of the covenant, to which all the promises are made.

Hence here you have the manner of the conveyance; namely, by free gift: “I will give thee a crown of life;” according to Rom. vi. 23, “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” And it must needs be by free gift, because there is nothing in the creature that can deserve it. The grace whereby we are faithful is free grace; and so the gift of the crown must be by free grace also. “It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” The more faithful we are to God through his grace, the more are we indebted to him who gives grace to be faithful; and how can the new debt merit a crown? Therefore it must be freely given. The crown of glory is a crown of mercy. “He crowneth us with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (Psa. ciii. 4). “Not unto us, not unto us, or to our faithfulness, but to thy name be glory,” will be the song of the redeemed.

Hence observe the sovereign reason of the conveyance; namely, his will and pleasure: “I will give thee a crown of life.” And, oh, how does the Father’s will harmonize with the Son’s in giving the crown! “Fear not, little flock,” says Christ; “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom;” and it is Christ’s

will expressed to the Father, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (John xvii. 24).

Do you wish, dear reader, for the confirmation of the doctrine, viz., that to those who are "faithful unto death" Christ is to give "a crown of life"? If so, I will show that it is so, and why it is so.

That it is so appears from Rev. ii. 10, with which agree many other promises. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 13). The "faithful unto death" are the "more than conquerors, through Christ;" and you will see that every epistle to the seven churches of Asia concludes with a promise to such of a "crown of life," under various names and denominations. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life" (Rev. ii. 7). "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written" (ver. 17). "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God" (chap. iii. 12). "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne" (ver. 21).

Why will he give the "crown of life"? Why

will he give a crown of life to them who are faithful unto death? Beside the sovereign reason I have mentioned, on the following accounts :—

He will give them a crown of life, because he has *promised* it to all who continue faithful in their day. See also Luke xxii. 28, 29 : “ Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.”

Because he has *purchased* it for them. As well as the grace of faithfulness, the glory that follows is also purchased ; therefore is heaven called the “ purchased possession ” (Eph. i. 14). The crown of life is the price of blood.

They shall have the crown because they are his *children*. They are born of God ; and, being children, they are “ heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ” (Rom. viii. 17). Among men the first-born only are heirs ; but all God’s children are heirs of a crown and kingdom.

To them who are faithful unto death he will give a crown of life because he is their *God*. This is the great reason why he will give them a crown of eternal life, because he who is “ the true God, and eternal life ” (1 John v. 20), is

"their God." It is said of the faithful under the Old Testament, "They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 16). Therefore when God is ours eternal life is ours: he will not be called our God for nothing.

To the faithful unto death he will give a crown of life because they are the "members of *his* body," who "is the head of the body, the church;" and the head being "crowned with glory and honour," so must the members be, so must "his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). They have the honour of making Christ mystical, perfect, and complete; and he, as the head, is gone away to heaven to "prepare a place" for them (John xiv. 2), and sends down his Spirit to prepare them for it. Though now they are despised and rejected, yet a little while, and they shall shine glorious in Christ's glory; for he will "come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 10).

To them who are faithful unto death he will give a crown of life because it is *suitable* that it should be so; not only suitable to the promise

and purchase I have spoken of, and suitable to their relation to him and his relation to them, but suitable to their desires ; and he hears “the desire of the humble.” It is suitable to their labour and pain ; for God hath said their “labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.” It is suitable to their hope and expectation : “The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.” It is suitable to their prayers : they pray for the crown, and he is the “hearer of prayer.” It is suitable to their needs and wants : they are weary with fighting, and they need rest ; “There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God.”

Dear reader, strive to be more faithful in the future ; for great will be your reward hereafter : you may be poor now, but you will be rich when you enter the heavenly home ; you may be meanly clad now, but you will wear shining robes in heaven ; you may have scarcely a covering to your head here, but in heaven you will have a crown of glory that fadeth not away ; you may have but little of the bread that perisheth now, but hereafter you will feast on the richest dainties of Divine love, and be abundantly satisfied. Be thou faithful, then, unto death ; improve every hour, employ more time

in God's service, and he will make your fears and doubts flee as chaff before the wind, and cause you to rejoice in his salvation. None of us spend as much time as we might and as we ought in the service of our Divine Lord and Master: let us pray that we may be more zealous and more devoted in the cause of One who loves us with an everlasting love.

Salmasius, one of the most consummate scholars of his time, saw cause to exclaim bitterly against himself. "Oh," said he, "I have lost a world of time—time, the most precious thing in the world ! Had I but one year more, it should be spent in perusing David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles. Oh, sirs," said he, addressing those about him, "*mind the world less, and God more!*"

Those who live nearest to God have most of his gracious presence in the hour of death. We all need much Divine grace to live well, and we shall all require very much to die well. Those saints who have endured most excruciating pain when dying, and have yet been very submissive to their heavenly Father's will, have been men of much faith and earnest prayer: we also must be distinguished for such holy exercises if we would be unspeakably happy.

Dr. Stonehouse, who attended Mr. —— during his last illness, seeing the great difficulty and pain with which he spoke, and finding by his pulse that the pangs of death were then coming on, desired that he would spare himself. "No," said he, "doctor; no. You tell me I have but a few minutes to live; oh, let me spend them in adoring our great Redeemer! Though my flesh and my heart fail me, yet God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." He then expatiated, in the most striking manner, on these words of Paul: "All things are yours; life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "Here," said he, "is the treasure of a Christian, and a noble treasure it is. *Death is reckoned in this inventory:* how thankful am I for it, as it is the passage through which I get to the Lord and Giver of eternal life, and as it frees me from all the misery you see me now endure, and which I am willing to endure as long as God thinks fit; for I know he will by-and-by, in his good time, dismiss me from the body. These light afflictions are but for a moment, and then comes an eternal weight of glory. Oh, welcome, welcome death! thou mayest well be reckoned among the *treasures*

of the Christian ! To live is Christ, but to die is gain."

"We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13). "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34).

O ye desponding ones, dry up your tears ; think less of your troubles, and more of the heavenly rest which awaits the conqueror. Rest, rest, rest, for the weary ! rest for you ! This rest will be absolutely perfect. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. There is no mixture of corruption with our graces, nor of suffering with our comfort. There are no waves in that harbour to toss us up and down. Here we are well to-day, to-morrow sick ; to-day in esteem, to-morrow in disgrace ; to-day we have friends, to-morrow none : nay, we have wine and vinegar in the same cup. If revelations raise us to the third heaven, the messenger of Satan must presently buffet us, and the thorn in the flesh fetch us down (2 Cor. xii. 2, 7). But there is none of this inconstancy in heaven. If "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 18),

then perfect joy must needs cast out sorrow, and perfect happiness exclude all the relics of misery. We shall there rest from all the evil of sin and of suffering.

Heaven excludes nothing more directly than sin, whether of nature or of conversation. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. xxi. 27). Why need Christ at all to have died, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). His blood and Spirit have not done all this, to leave us, after all, defiled. "What communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15). Christian, if thou be once in heaven, thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed and watched against it so long? I know if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin than have all the world. Thou shalt have thy desire. That hard heart, those vile thoughts which accompanied thee to every duty, shall now be left behind for ever. Thy understanding shall never more be troubled

with darkness. All dark scriptures shall be made plain, all seeming contradictions reconciled. The poorest Christian is presently there a more perfect divine than any here. Oh that happy day, when error shall vanish for ever ; when our understanding shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us ! His face shall be the Scripture, where we shall read the truth. Many a godly man hath here, in his mistaken zeal, been a means of deceiving and perverting his brethren, and, when he sees his own error, cannot tell how to undeceive them. But there we shall hold one truth, as being one in Him who is the Truth. We shall also rest from the sin of our will, affection, and conversation. We shall no more retain this rebelling principle, which is still drawing us from God ; no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence : no pride, passion, slothfulness, insensibility, shall enter with us ; no strangeness to God and the things of God ; no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love ; no uneven walking, nor grieving of the Spirit ; no scandalous action, nor unholy conversation : we shall cease from *these* for ever. Then shall our will correspond

to the Divine will, as face answers to face in a glass, and from which, as our law and rule, we shall never swerve. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Heb. iv. 10).

Our sufferings were but the consequences of our sinning, and in heaven they both shall cease together. We shall rest from all our doubts of God's love. It shall no more be said that "doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed, but growing in good ground." They shall now be weeded out, and trouble the gracious soul no more. We shall hear that kind of language no more, "What shall I do to know my state? How shall I know that God is my Father, that my heart is upright, that my conversation is true, that my faith is sincere? I am afraid my sins are unpardonable, that all I do is hypocrisy, that God will reject me, that he does not hear my prayers." All this is there turned into praise. We shall rest from all sense of God's displeasure. Hell shall not be mixed with heaven. At times the gracious soul "remembered God, and was troubled; complained, and was overwhelmed, and refused to be comforted; *Divine wrath lay hard upon him, and God*

afflicted him with all his waves" (Dr. Preston: Psa. lxxvii. 2, 3; lxxiii. 7). But that blessed day shall convince us that, though God hid his face from us for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on us (Isa. liv. 8). We shall rest from all the temptations of Satan. What a grief is it to a Christian, though he yield not to the temptation, yet to be solicited to deny his Lord! What a torment to have such horrid motions in his soul, such blasphemous ideas presented to his imagination! sometimes cruel thoughts of God, undervaluing thoughts of Christ, unbelieving thoughts of Scripture, or injurious thoughts of Providence! to be tempted sometimes to turn to present things, to play with the baits of sin, and venture on the delights of flesh, and sometimes to atheism itself! especially when we know the treachery of our own hearts, ready, as tinder, to take fire as soon as a spark shall fall upon them! Satan hath power here to tempt us in the wilderness, but he entereth not the holy city; he may set us on a pinnacle of the temple in the earthly Jerusalem, but the New Jerusalem he may not approach; he may take us up into an exceeding high mountain, but the Mount Siōn he cannot ascend; and if he could, all the kingdoms of the world, and

the glory of them (Matt. iv.), would be a despised bait to a soul possessed of the kingdom of our Lord. No ; it is in vain for Satan to offer a temptation more. All our temptations from the world and the flesh shall also cease. Oh, the hourly dangers that we here walk in ! Every sense and member is a snare ; every creature, every mercy, and every duty is a snare to us. We can scarce open our eyes but we are in danger of envying those above us, or despising those below us ; of coveting the honours and riches of some, or beholding the rags and wretchedness of others with pride and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust ; if deformity, to loathing and disdain. How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, and wanton speeches creep into the heart ! How constant and strong a watch does our appetite require ! Have we comeliness and beauty ? what fuel for pride ! Are we deformed ? what an occasion of repining ! Have we strength of reason, and gifts of learning ? oh, how prone to be puffed up, hunt after applause, and despise our brethren ! Are we unlearned ? how apt then to despise what we have not ! Are we in places of authority ? how strong is the temptation to abuse our trust, make our will our law, and cut out all the

enjoyments of others by the rules and model of our own interest and policy ! Are we inferiors ? how prone to grudge others' preeminence, and bring their actions to the bar of our judgment ! Are we rich, and too much exalted ? are we poor, and not discontented ? Are we not lazy in our duties, or do we not make a Christ of them ? Not that God hath made all these things our snares ; but through our own corruption they become so to us. Ourselves are the greatest snare to ourselves. This is our comfort : our rest will free us from all these. As Satan has no entrance there, but all things there shall join with us in the high praises of our great Deliverer. As we rest from the temptations, so shall we likewise from the abuses and persecutions of the world. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God will avenge their blood on them that dwell on earth (Rev. vi. 9, 10). This is the time for crowning with thorns, that for crowning with glory. Now all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. iii. 12) ; then they that suffered with him shall be glorified with him (Rom. viii. 17). Now we must be hated of all men for Christ's name's sake (Matt. x. 23) ; then Christ will be admired

in his saints that were thus hated (2 Thess. i. 10). We are here made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men, as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things (1 Cor. iv. 9, 13); men separate us from their company, and reproach us, and cast out our names as evil (Luke vi. 22); but we shall then be as much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the Church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they will or not. We can now scarce pray in our families, or sing praises to God, but our voice is a vexation to them: how must it torment them then, to see us praising and rejoicing while they are howling and lamenting! You, brethren, who can now attempt no work of God without losing the love of the world, consider you shall have none in heaven but will further your work, and join heart and voice with you in everlasting joy and praise. Until then, possess ye your souls in patience (Luke xxi. 19). Bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us" (2 Thess. i. 6, 7). We shall then rest from all our sad

divisions, and unchristian quarrels with one another. How lovingly do thousands live together in heaven who lived at variance upon earth ! There is no contention, because none of this pride, ignorance, or other corruption. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brethren. If there be sorrow or shame in heaven, we shall then be both sorry and ashamed to remember all this carriage on earth ; as Joseph's brethren were to behold him when they remembered their former unkind usage. Is it not enough that the world is against us but we must also be against one another ? Oh, happy days of persecution, which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine of liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our contentions ! Oh, happy day of the saint's rest in glory, when, as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, so we shall have one heart, one Church, one employment, for ever ! We shall then rest from the participation of our brethren's sufferings. The Church on earth is a mere hospital ; some groaning under a dark understanding, some under an insensible heart ; some languishing under unfruitful weakness, and some bleeding for miscarriages and wilfulness ; some crying

because of their poverty, some groaning under pains and infirmities, and some bewailing a whole catalogue of calamities. But a far greater grief is it to see our dearest and most intimate friends turned aside from the truth of Christ, continuing their neglect of Christ and their souls, and by nothing awakened out of their security ; to look on an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister, wife or husband, child or friend, and think how certainly they will be in hell for ever if they die in their present unregenerate state ; to think of the Gospel departing, the glory taken from our Israel, poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and rejecting the light that would guide them to salvation ! The day of rest will free us from all this, when “the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous : they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of thy planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified” (Isa. lx. 20, 21). Then we shall rest from all our own personal sufferings. This may seem a small thing to those that live in ease and prosperity ; but to the daily afflicted soul it makes the thoughts of heaven delightful. Oh, the dying life we now live ; as full of sufferings as of days and hours ! Our Redeemer

leaves this measure of misery upon us to make us know for what we are beholden, to remind us of what we should else forget, to be serviceable to his wise and gracious designs, and advantageous to our full and final recovery. Grief enters at every sense, seizes every part and power of flesh and spirit. What noble part is there that suffereth its pain or ruin alone? But sin and flesh, dust and pain, will all be left behind together. Oh, the blessed tranquillity of that region where there is nothing but sweet continued peace! Oh, healthful place, where none are sick! Oh, fortunate land, where all are kings! Oh, holy assembly, where all are priests! How free a state where none are servants, but to their supreme Monarch! The poor man shall no more be tired with his labours: no more hunger or thirst, cold or nakedness: no pinching frosts or scorching heats. Our faces shall no more be pale or sad: no more breaches in friendship, nor parting of friends: no more trouble accompanying our relations, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings! God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes (Rev. vii. 16, 17). O my soul, bear with the infirmities of thine earthly tabernacle: it will be thus but a little while; the sound of thy

Redeemer's feet is even at the door. We shall also rest from all the toil of duties. The conscientious magistrate, parent, and minister cries out, "Oh, the burden that lies upon me!" Every relation, state, age, hath variety of duties; so that every conscientious Christian cries out, "Oh, the burden! Oh, my weakness, that makes it burdensome!" But our remaining rest will ease us of the burdens. Once more, we shall rest from all these troublesome afflictions which necessarily accompany our absence from God. The trouble that is mixed in our desires and hopes, our longings and waitings, shall then cease. We shall no more look into our cabinet, and miss our treasure; into our hearts, and miss our Christ; no more seek him from ordinance to ordinance; but all be united in a most full and blessed enjoyment.

The last jewel of our crown is, that it will be an everlasting rest. Without this all were comparatively nothing. The very thought of leaving it would embitter all our joys. It would be a hell in heaven to think of once losing heaven, as it would be a kind of heaven to the damned had they but hopes of once escaping. Mortality is the disgrace of all sublunary delights. How it spoils our pleasure to see it dying in our

hands ! But oh, blessed eternity, where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears ! where we shall be pillars in the temple of our God, and go no more out (Rev. iii. 12). While we were servants we held by lease, and that but for the term of a transitory life ; but the son abideth in the house for ever (John viii. 35). O my soul, let go thy dreams of present pleasure, and loose thy hold of earth and flesh. Study frequently, study thoroughly, this one word, *eternity*. What ! live, and never die ! rejoice, and ever rejoice ! O happy souls in hell, should you but escape after millions of ages ! O miserable saints in heaven, should you be dispossessed after the age of a million of worlds ! This word *everlasting* contains the perfection of their torment and our glory. Oh that the sinner would study this word ! methinks it would startle him out of his dead sleep. Oh that the gracious soul would study it ! methinks it would revive him in his deepest agony. "And must I, Lord, thus live for ever ? then will I also love for ever. Must my joys be immortal ? and shall not my thanks be also immortal ? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will never cease thy praises. If thou wilt both perfect and perpe-

tuate me and my glory, as I shall be thine, and not my own, so shall my glory be thy glory. And as thy glory was thy ultimate end in my glory, so shall it also be my end when thou hast crowned me with that glory which hath no end." "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Tim. i. 17).

Thus I have endeavoured to show you a glimpse of approaching glory. But how short are my expressions of its excellency ! Reader, if thou art a humble sincere believer, and waitest with longing and labouring for this rest, thou wilt shortly see and feel the truth of all this. Thou wilt then have so clear an apprehension of this blessed state as will make thee pity the ignorance and distance of mortals, and wilt find that all that is here said falls short of the whole truth a thousandfold. In the meantime, let this kindle thy desires and quicken thy endeavours : up and be doing, run, strive, and fight, and hold on ! for thou hast a certain, glorious prize before thee. God will not mock thee : do not mock thyself, nor betray thy soul by delaying, and all that is thine own. What kind of men, dost thou think, *would* Christians be in their lives and duties if

they had still this glory fresh in their thoughts ? What frame would their spirits be in if their thoughts of heaven were lively and believing ? Would their hearts be so heavy, their countenances so sad ? or would they have need to take up their comforts from below ? Would they be so loath to suffer, so afraid to die ? or would they not think every day a year till they enjoy it ? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we enter not into this rest because of unbelief (Heb. iii. 19).

Dear reader, let me impress upon you the importance of seeking comfort and rest in the love of the Divine Saviour. Can you say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" ? (Isa. xlv. 24). If not, wrestle with him in prayer until you can. The Lord Jesus will hear and answer earnest believing prayer. No one ever need fear to approach the throne of grace ; for "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v. 31). Every day we should be preparing for the solemn hour of death, for the coming of Christ Jesus. We should think and converse much about heaven, about our Father's house ; that we "may be counted worthy of

the kingdom of God, for which" we "also suffer" (2 Thess. i. 5). Whether at home or abroad, we should spend every moment profitably.

Mr. Flavel, at one time on a journey, set himself to improve his time by meditation; when his mind grew intent, till at length he had such ravishing tastes of heavenly joy, and such full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost the sight and sense of this world and all its concerns, so that he knew not where he was. At last, perceiving himself faint through a great loss of blood from his nose, he alighted from his horse, and sat down at a spring, where he washed and refreshed himself, earnestly desiring, if it were the will of God, that he might there leave the world. His spirits reviving, he finished his journey in the same delightful frame. He passed that night without any sleep, the joy of the Lord still abounding, so that he seemed an inhabitant of the other world. After this, a heavenly serenity and sweet peace long continued with him; and for many years he called that day "one of the days of heaven!" and professed that he understood more of the life of heaven by it than by all the discourses he had heard or the books he had ever read.

God our heavenly Father prepares his dear children for the blissful society above by holy fellowship and communion, by trials and sorrows, and at last rewards them with a crown of life.

There is Rest for the Weary, Joy for the Sorrowful, Comfort for the Afflicted, Grace for the Tempted, and a Crown for the Conqueror : for every penitent, believing sinner there is a crown of eternal life. Let the greatest sinners come to Jesus ; for he is able and willing to do more than they can ask or think. "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 17).

No blood, no altar now ;
The sacrifice is o'er :
No flame, no smoke, ascends on high ;
The lamb is slain no more !
But richer blood has flowed from nobler veins,
To purge the soul from guilt, and cleanse the
reddest stains.

We thank thee for the blood,
The blood of Christ, thy Son ;
The blood by which our peace is made,
Our victory is won ;

Great victory o'er hell, and sin, and woe,
That needs no second fight, and leaves no
second foe.

We thank thee for the grace,
Descending from above,
That overflows our widest guilt—
The eternal Father's love ;
Love of the Father's everlasting Son ;
Love of the Holy Ghost, Jehovah, Three in One.

We thank thee for the hope,
So glad, and sure, and clear ;
It holds the drooping spirit up
Till the long dawn appear :
Fair hope ! with what a sunshine does it cheer
Our roughest path on earth, our dreariest desert
here !

We thank thee for the crown
Of glory and of life :
'Tis no poor withering wreath of earth,
Man's prize in mortal strife ;
'Tis incorruptible as is the throne,
The kingdom of our God and his Incarnate Son.

PRECIOUS PROMISES.

“An entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. i. 11).

“The righteous shall go away into life eternal” (Matt. xxv. 46).

“The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isa. xxxii. 17).

“Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa. xlvi. 17).

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. vii. 15—17).

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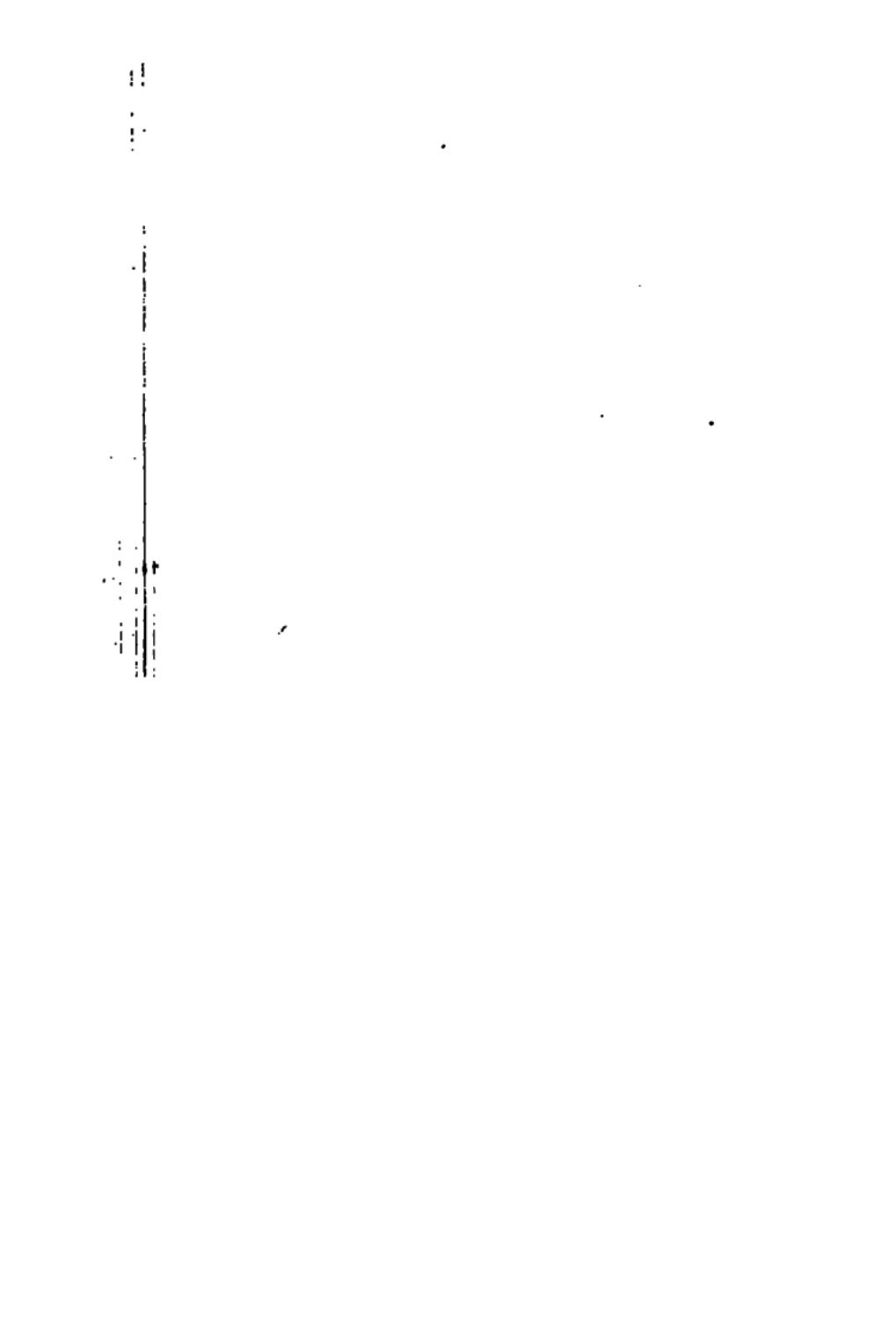
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